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Gold Cup guide

Who to back on Cheltenham's big day Pullout



Dash to retire before Labour reverses tax-free allowance plan

Steven Swinford Political Editor

Labour's pledge to reverse the abolition of the lifetime allowance on pension savings could prompt more doctors and professionals to retire early in a "gold rush" before the next election.

Jeremy Hunt, the chancellor, announced in the budget on Wednesday that he was scrapping the £1.07 million tax-free pensions lifetime allowance to try to encourage professionals back to work. At present some doctors are retiring early to avoid massive tax bills.

Labour described the policy as a "bung to the 1 per cent". It said Hunt's pension reforms, which are expected to cost more than £75,000 for every person they encourage back to work, were a "gilded giveaway" and pledged to reintroduce the lifetime allowance if it won the election.

Steve Webb, a former Liberal Democrat pensions minister, said the changes could lead to a "gold rush" as workers accelerated pension savings, then cashed in by retiring early before the election if they thought Labour would win.

The Office for Budget Responsibility has estimated that Hunt's plans to abolish the lifetime allowance and raise annual tax-free savings allowances from £40,000 to £60,000 — forecast to cost the government £1.13billion by 2028 — could lead to 15,000 people returning to work.

However, Paul Johnson, director of the Institute for Fiscal Studies think tank, said this assumption was optimistic. Comparing the policy to using a "rather large sledgehammer to crack a very small nut", he said it could open up an inheritance loophole as people piled money into their pensions tax-free.

Downing Street said it decided to abolish the lifetime allowance because it did not want to waste time by devising a bespoke scheme for doctors, which it **Continued on page 2**

U.S. AIR FORCE



Superpowers' scuffle in sky

Video footage from a US military surveillance drone shows the moment a Russian jet zoomed past in the nations' first direct clash of the Ukraine war Pages 28-29

Unions back 'fair' raise for a million NHS staff

Ballots in next month on 5% pay rise and cash bonus to end strikes

Chris Smyth Whitehall Editor

More than a million NHS staff will get a pay rise and cash bonus in a breakthrough that ministers believe offers a way to end months of strikes across public services.

Rishi Sunak said a 5 per cent pay rise from next month, plus a one-off payment of at least £1,655 for nurses, paramedics and other frontline staff, was "a fair deal" that showed other unions he was serious about ending strikes.

The NHS has been asked to fund the improved deal, but the Treasury is expected to provide billions of pounds in extra cash — in effect rewriting this week's budget "before the ink is dry".

All but one of the main health unions will recommend the deal as a "fair and reasonable settlement". Although staff could reject it in ballots expected to be completed within the next month, ministers are not threatening to withdraw the offer if they do, meaning the money is almost certain to be paid out.

Education and civil service unions said they hoped a deal with NHS staff could unlock solutions to settle more industrial disputes.

However, other public sector staff are likely to be offered less than nurses and paramedics, who officials say have the most public sympathy and are struggling to attract new recruits.

In February Sunak dropped his insistence that pay awards for this financial year could not be reopened. Improving public finances have created space for an offer that falling inflation has made more appealing to unions. A one-off bonus worth between £1,655 and £3,789 would be given to staff ranging from hospital porters to senior nurses, equivalent to about 6 per cent of their yearly pay and costing an estimated £4.2billion.

These payments will not be carried over into 2023-24, when staff will get a 5 per cent rise — except for the lowest-paid, who will get more to take their hourly rate to £11.45 — at a cost of £3.5billion a year. Sunak said the deal would "put disruptive strike action behind us" and showed other unions **Continued on page 2**

Musicians may boycott Proms over axing of BBC Singers

David Sanderson Arts Correspondent

The abolition of the BBC Singers is putting Britain's peerless choral tradition at risk, the corporation was warned yesterday as musicians considered a boycott of this year's Proms.

The BBC's decision to disband the country's only professional chamber choir and make sweeping cuts to its orchestras has prompted an angry response from across the music industry.

A letter in today's Times signed by a string of senior figures warns against the damage to Britain's "internationally revered choral sector".

The signatories state: "We stand united in our utter dismay at the BBC's planned disbandment of the UK's only full-time professional chamber choir, the BBC Singers. This decision is indicative of the persistent devaluation of choral music and the nation's rich and excellent choral heritage."

The cuts proposed by the BBC, which faces a real-terms cut in the licence fee, come after what was seen as an attack on the classical music sector by Arts Council England, which last year announced the withdrawal of millions of pounds of subsidies from three of the country's leading opera companies.

Rob Johnston and Jonathan Manners, co-directors of the BBC Singers, made their anger plain in a letter to the corporation's board. Their message, leaked to the Slipped Disc website, said there was "dangerous neglect by senior members of staff towards the classical music offering of the BBC".

Negotiations between the Musicians' Union and the BBC over redundancies are continuing. The BBC's proposals would involve the loss of about 20 jobs with the BBC Singers and 20 per cent of musicians across its symphony, concert and philharmonic orchestras.

Strong criticism of the proposals has led to speculation that this summer's Proms Festival, organised by the BBC, could be boycotted. The last boycott was in 1980, over plans to make dozens of musicians redundant. That year the first 20 concerts were cancelled.

A false economy, letters, page 26
Musicians could snub Proms, Richard Morrison, Times2

VISIT…

LANZAROTE Caliente.com

Today's highlights

7.50am **Dex Hunter-Torricke**, former speechwriter to Mark Zuckerberg at Facebook

2pm **Oliver Soden**, the author of a new biography of Noël Coward

6.35pm **Cathy Newman**'s The Ladder with **Rachel de Souza**, the children's commissioner

9.40pm **Ed Vaizey** chats to the actress **Imogen Stubbs**, right

10.30pm **Henry Bonsu** takes a first look at tomorrow's newspaper front pages



TIMES RADIO

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TODAY'S EDITION

Sunak urged to curb migration

Rishi Sunak has been urged to revive a Conservative manifesto pledge to reduce net migration to tens of thousands after official forecasts were upgraded to predict that the annual total will settle at 245,000 in the long term. **Page 8**

Putin opponent backs oligarch

A jailed Russian opposition leader says the billionaire Mikhail Fridman, the last of the Moscow oligarchs still living in London, should be freed from sanctions. Ilya Yashin was arrested last year after condemning Russia's actions in Ukraine. **Page 12**

Partridge could sire rare ponies

An award-winning pony named after the comedy character Alan Partridge has been selected to donate semen to a gene bank as part of a campaign by the Exmoor Pony Society to secure the future of Britain's oldest native breed. **Page 17**

COMMENT

Labour and the Tories are learning to play by Aussie rules for the next election

KATY BALLS, PAGE 23

Macron raises retirement age

President Macron's government bypassed parliament to raise the retirement age for a state pension from 62 to 64 without a vote. Opposition parties can block the bill only by toppling the government, with a vote likely to be held next week. **Page 28**

Wall Street steps in to save bank

A consortium of Wall Street's biggest investment banks rescued First Republic Bank with $30 billion in deposits to calm financial markets after the recent failure of three US lenders and the continuing fallout from Credit Suisse's struggles. **Page 33**

Arundell faces ultimate test

Steve Borthwick has backed Henry Arundell, 20, to cope with the pressure of starting a game on the wing for the first time in his career against the best rugby team in the world. He will make his full England debut against Ireland tomorrow. **Page 68**

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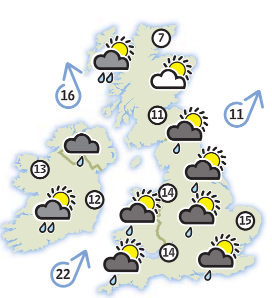
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THE WEATHER



Cloud and widespread showers, heaviest and most frequent in western areas. **Full forecast, page 57**

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Credit Suisse takes emergency loan to calm rattled investors

Patrick Hosking, Ben Martin
Helen Cahill

Credit Suisse, Switzerland's second-biggest bank, has become the first major financial institution to tap an emergency lifeline since the banking crisis of 2008.

The Zürich-based lender said it would make use of an emergency loan of up to SwFr50 billion (£45 billion) by the Swiss authorities as it sought to calm the nerves of its shareholders, bondholders and depositors.

The bank, which looks after £1.1 trillion of deposits and investments, and employs 5,000 people in the City of London, said it took "decisive action to pre-emptively strengthen liquidity".

Confidence in the bank dived this week after it warned of "material weaknesses" in its internal controls and said it was heading for another loss this year. The bank has also been engulfed in a series of scandals, including the fallout from the collapse of Greensill Capital.

The failure last week of Silicon Valley Bank, America's 16th-biggest bank, and two other smaller US banks has sent confidence in some banks plunging. Investors are concerned that other financial institutions may have been wrongfooted by the sharp rise in interest rates, which has pushed down the value of their bond holdings.

Switzerland's central bank, the Swiss National Bank, and its regulator, Finma, issued a supportive statement overnight saying Credit Suisse was meeting capital and liquidity rules, and that it would support it with the new credit line.

They also sought to play down the risk of contagion from the US. "The problems of certain banks in the USA do not pose a direct risk of contagion for the Swiss financial markets," they said.

The crisis bubbled up again last night in the US amid reports that some stronger banks were attempting to mount a $25 billion rescue of First Republic, another bank struggling with depositor withdrawals.

Shares in Credit Suisse rallied by 19 per cent to SwFr2.02 yesterday as analysts said the lifeline would give the bank breathing space to calm investor nerves. UK bank shares bounced back and the FTSE 100 index ended the day 66 points higher, at 7410.

Credit Suisse is one of only 30 banks in the world designated by regulators as so large and internationally connected that they pose greater "contagion risk" and are required to meet tougher rules on financial strength and liquidity.

Analysts at JP Morgan said the "status quo" for Credit Suisse was "no longer an option". A takeover, possibly by its larger Swiss rival UBS, was "the most likely scenario," according to the analyst Kian Abouhossein.

Although SVB in the US was allowed to fail, with all deposits guaranteed by the authorities, its subsidiary in Britain, SVBUK, was bought by HSBC for £1. The UK operation had about 3,300 corporate customers, many of them ambitious tech-driven start-ups.

Regulators have been concerned that recent nerves could precipitate a destabilising withdrawal of deposits and funds from Credit Suisse. The last time there was a panic about its viability, in October last year, the bank recorded huge outflows, with a net SwFr110.5 billion pulled out in the fourth quarter, the most yet recorded by the bank.

Near textbook case of moral hazard, Gerard Baker, page 25
Risks in obscure corners are emerging, leading article, page 27
Catalogue of scandals has dented confidence, business, page 33-35

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Dash to retire

said may not have been ready this year. It argued that there was "broad value" in the policy because it also applied to other professionals, including head teachers and air traffic controllers.

Hunt claimed that Labour had previously backed the abolition of the lifetime allowance.

He pointed to an interview given in September last year by Wes Streeting, the shadow health secretary, in which he said he wanted to "do away" with the cap.

Streeting clarified yesterday that he was referring to a bespoke deal for doctors rather than calling for the cap to be abolished outright, adding that a targeted approach could cost as little as £32 million. Sir Keir Starmer, the Labour leader, said: "What Wes Streeting and I are clear about is there could have been a tailor-made approach for doctors, but in the end we've spent £1 billion on the richest 1 per cent while everybody else is struggling with the cost of living crisis.

"I think most people would say, 'How on earth can that be a priority for the government?'"

Hunt rejected claims that his budget was a "tax giveaway for the very rich". He told Times Radio: "I think it is a rather bizarre thing to say that, when this is a set of measures that mean in two weeks' time we are going to be spending a total of £94 billion this year, a huge amount of money, giving around £3,000 of cost of living support to a typical household, including uprating benefits with inflation [and] one-off payments to people on low incomes of up to £900.

"We've extended the energy price guarantee at £2,500 for another three months, we've frozen the rise in fuel duty — these are cost of living measures that show we are a country, and indeed a government, that wants to help people on low incomes through difficult times."

He said the lifetime allowance measure would also help people to see a doctor more quickly.

Speaking later on the *Today* programme on BBC Radio 4, Hunt said the cost of living support package "dwarfs any of the other single measures that we've done".

Households' tax hit, pages 6-7
Hunt for solutions, letters, page 26

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Unions back NHS pay deal

"we're serious about finding fair and reasonable agreements".

Steve Barclay, the health secretary, told junior doctors — who walked out for three days this week — that he would offer them the same terms. He insisted their demand for a 35 per cent rise was unaffordable.

Pat Cullen, general secretary of the Royal College of Nursing, said strikes had been "vindicated" by ministers reopening pay talks. She said the deal showed "tangible progress", including commitments on safe staffing.

Unite is the only union not to back the deal but it will not oppose it, leaving members to decide.

Matthew Taylor, chief executive of the NHS Confederation, said health chiefs would "breathe a sigh of relief", but added he was "keen for the government to explain the full mechanics of how this award will be funded … [or] it will be a situation where we are robbing Peter to pay Paul".

The Treasury has asked the Department of Health to fund the pay increases beyond the 3.5 per cent already budgeted for, but NHS England has repeatedly warned that it would have to cut back on cancer care and attempts to tackle backlogs to fund pay rises.

Sunak promised frontline services would "absolutely not" be harmed by the settlement. Sources suggested that the £14 billion contingency fund in the budget was already being eyed up.

As teachers in England and Wales went on strike for a second day yesterday, Geoff Barton, general secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders, said he was "encouraged" by the NHS deal, adding: "We remain hopeful that there will soon be a resolution in the education sector." Mike Clancy, general secretary of the Prospect union, which represents civil servants, added: "The deal … may provide a template for unlocking disputes elsewhere in the wider public sector."

We must improve the NHS to extend life expectancy, Emma Duncan, page 24
Healthy debate, letters, page 26

Analysis

Have the months of public sector strikes been unnecessary? That is the question posed by a deal on NHS pay that critics say could have been done months ago (Chris Smyth writes).

Rishi Sunak spent the end of last year insisting that pay deals for 2022-23 could not be reopened, only to change his mind abruptly last month and accept the need for a one-off bonus.

There are practical and political reasons why a deal has become easier to strike in recent weeks. Treasury insistence that pay rises above 5 per cent would be an unacceptable inflation risk had been a sticking point. But inflation appears to have peaked, with budget forecasts suggesting that the 10.7 per cent at the end of last year would fall to 2.9 per cent by the end of this year. In that context, a 5 per cent offer through to April 2024 "doesn't look too bad", as one union source put it.

Improved economic forecasts gave Jeremy Hunt more scope for a bigger one-off bonus. Falling energy prices did not allow for extra permanent spending, but created a one-off windfall. Although not included in the budget, some of that is in effect being spent on a non-consolidated payment to NHS staff.

Politically, the strikes have been a score draw. Unions showed ministers they cannot be taken for granted and ministers made the point to unions that they are no pushovers and to voters that they can be trusted with taxpayers' money.

Up in arms over first octopus farm



GETTY IMAGES

‘Cruel’ plans to raise a million molluscs a year for calamari have been met with anger, writes **Isambard Wilkinson**

A sizzling dish of seared octopus seasoned with paprika has long whetted the appetites of Madrid’s diners but a growing taste for it internationally has created a fathomless demand.

In response, a Spanish company has set up the world’s first octopus farm. But growing scientific knowledge about the animals — and a documentary about a film-maker’s friendship with one, *My Octopus Teacher* — have increased concern for their welfare.

Nueva Pescanova’s £57 million plan to establish the farm in the Canary Islands has been described as an “aberration” and “cruel” by animal welfare and environmental groups. The farm would produce 3,000kg a year of octopus — about a million animals — at a facility in the port of Las Palmas, Gran Canaria.

Between 2010 and 2019 the value of the global octopus trade ballooned from $1.3 billion to $2.72 billion, according to data from the UN Food and Agricultural Organisation.

More than 60 activist groups have opposed the farm, with a protest held last month in Las Palmas.



Iris Sánchez, of the Pacma animal welfare group, said octopuses were “sentient animals, intelligent, very creative and solitary”. The plan would “condemn them to live in a small and limited space together with other individuals, with all the psychological and physical damage that can cause them”, she said.

There are no welfare rules, as octopuses have never been commercially farmed before.

Elena Lara, from the Compassion in World Farming group, said: “The right, the moral and the ethical way is to not allow the Canary Islands, or any other place in the country, to suffer the dishonour of opening this centre of extermination of the octopus.”

Ten to 15 octopuses would live in each cubic metre of tank, the group said. Nueva Pescanova anticipates a mortality rate of up to 15 per cent, according to documentation seen by the BBC. Traditional fishermen are also wary of the project, concerned that it could lower prices and undermine their reputation for quality.

Nueva Pescanova has defended the farm, saying that it would create 300 jobs in the area. It said it was founded on decades of academic research and had trumped the bids of rival companies from Mexico and Japan to perfect the conditions needed for industrial-scale breeding.

The battle to discover the secret to breeding octopuses in captivity has lasted decades. The process is difficult as the larvae eat only live food and need a carefully controlled environment. In 2019 Nueva Pescanova announced it had cracked the problem.

A spokesman said that the “scientific challenge” was now “the optimisation and welfare of the common octopus under farming conditions”, adding that eight research centres were working on this. These were “revealing properties and unprecedented behaviours about the *Octopus vulgaris* species that will be shared with the scientific community”.

Previous efforts to farm the animals have struggled with high mortality rates, and attempts to breed those caught in the wild resulted in aggression, cannibalism and self-mutilation.

In 2021 researchers at the London School of Economics concluded from a review of 300 scientific studies that octopuses were sentient beings capable of experiencing distress and happiness, and that high-welfare farming of them would be impossible.

Eduardo Almansa, a researcher at IEO, the Canary Islands Oceanographic Centre, and the University of La Laguna, said: “Do we want to continue eating octopus? Because demand is increasing worldwide, and at this rate fisheries will not be able to cover it. We are trying to find alternatives to produce a food in a viable and sustainable way and that ensures animal welfare.”



Octopuses are intelligent, creative and solitary creatures, and opponents of Nueva Pescanova’s planned farm at a facility in Gran Canaria, left, fear for their welfare even before they are slaughtered for food

Brainboxes of the deep

Octopuses have about 500 million neurons, the same as an average dog and double those of a cat.

Their intelligence has been long known, and they are recognised as sentient beings under animal welfare laws in the UK.

They have annoyed many marine researchers with their cunningness, destroying lab tools, wrecking underwater cameras and opening screw-top jars set to trap them.

That’s if the researchers can find them at all — remarkable powers of camouflage mean the creatures can morph their skin texture and colour to hide from predators.

Three hearts pump blood to their arms, and each arm has a “mini-brain” that can process touch, smell and taste. Some hunt by tapping prey on the shoulder while others can even walk on land to find food.

Fire exposed Notre Dame’s iron frame

Jack Blackburn History Correspondent

There can be no denying that the Notre Dame fire of 2019 was disastrous, but the inferno has helped to reveal how truly extraordinary the building was.

Archaeologists have confirmed that, from its very earliest days almost 900 years ago, the Paris cathedral was built with a groundbreaking iron skeleton and was the first building of its kind.

The fire allowed experts to investigate 12 iron “staples”, each about half a metre long, which were used to bind and stabilise the building’s stonework. Carbon dating and other tests revealed that the pieces dated back to the 12th and 13th centuries, meaning that they had been used in the earliest phases of Notre Dame’s construction.

“They reveal that Notre Dame is the first known gothic cathedral where iron was massively used as a proper construction material to bind stones throughout its entire construction, leading to a better understanding of the master masons’ thinking,” said a paper published in the journal Plos One.

The cathedral had several stages of construction, but at least some of the staples appear to date from the 1160s, the decade when building work began.

This appears to indicate that the builders of Notre Dame were experimenting with new techniques to ensure the integrity of the enormous building. The staples were used for reinforcement, especially of the arches in the nave beneath the cathedral’s twin towers. The success of this method may have inspired its use in later gothic cathedrals.

Notre Dame was partially destroyed in April 2019. No cause was established but theories included a stray cigarette or an electrical short circuit. It is due to reopen next year, but hopes it might be ready for the Paris Olympics are set to be dashed.

Dendrochronologists can study burnt wood from the gutted building which was taken off the site. This collection is known as “the forest” and contains wood from more than 1,000 trees.

It will also provide an insight into the climate at the time. The 12th century was in the middle of the “medieval warming period”. The enormous sample provided by Notre Dame will give climate scientists with one of their best insights into this phenomenon.

“It is unusual to have such a combination of research and scientific skill all focused at the same time on a single monument,” said Maxime L’Héritier, lead author of the study, writing for the Sapiens website. “The result is really fascinating and fruitful.”

Super-rich upgrades drive Bentley profits still higher

Tom Howard

The growing desire among the super-rich to personalise their luxury cars or have them built from scratch helped Bentley to motor to another year of record profits last year.

A record production run of 15,174 cars rolled off its assembly line in Crewe, with much fatter margins on its Bentayga 4x4s and other models.

Although production increased only 4 per cent year on year, turnover rose by 19 per cent to €3.38 billion, from €2.85 billion the previous year. Operating profits almost doubled to €708 million, up from £389 million in 2021.

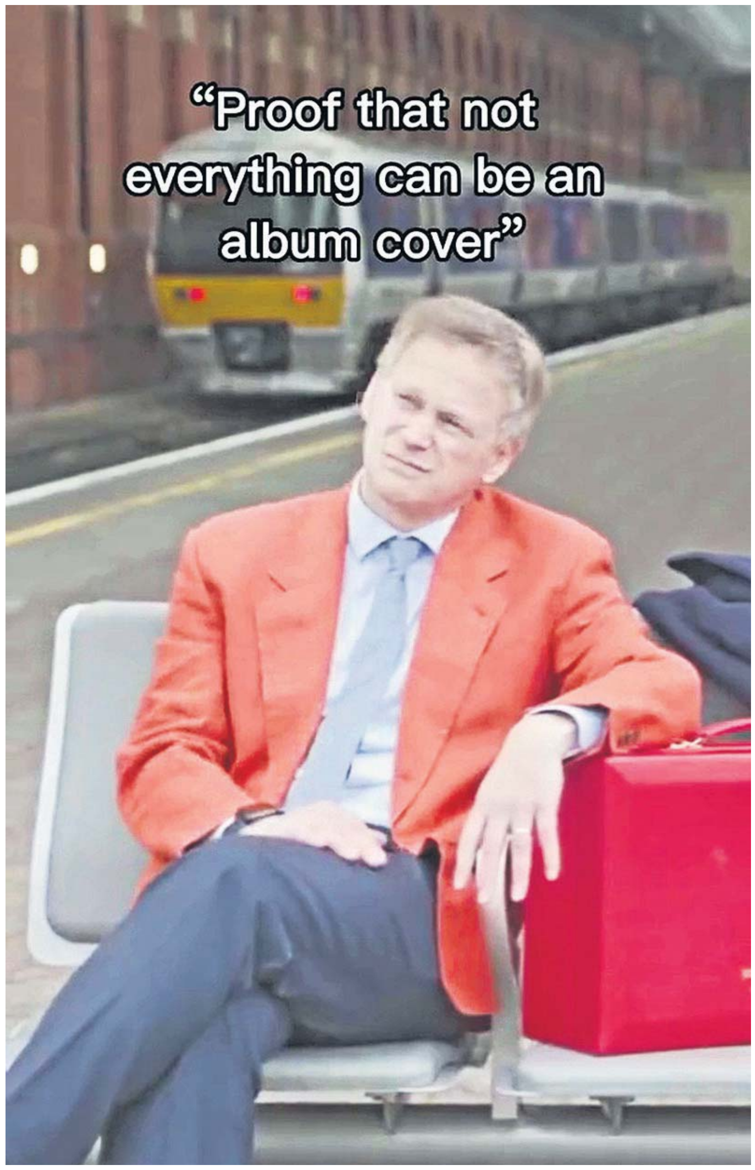
The Bentayga, the most popular Bentley model, accounting for nearly half of sales, starts at about £160,000 but last year many customers paid far more as they added more upgrades and personalisation. It was a trend that Bentley saw across all of its models.

Bentley buyers can change the stitching in the seats to silk, or upgrade the dashboard to a rotating display that can switch between traditional dials and a more modern screen. Typically, about a quarter of customers would be expected to add those to their cars, at a total cost of more than €10,000 each. Last year more than 90 per cent of customers chose to do so.

The turnaround in profitability will help to fund Bentley’s “Beyond 100” strategy, a €3 billion plan to become an all-electric marque by 2030.







Grant Shapps, above, will keep using TikTok privately. Boris Johnson used a No 10 account to illustrate UK-Australian unity, far left, while Matt Hancock flipped out

Government bans TikTok from officials' mobile phones

Matt Dathan Home Affairs Editor

TikTok has been banned from all government phones with immediate effect amid security concerns over the video app's Chinese ownership.

Civil servants will also be barred from accessing it on government computers unless authorised on a case-by-case basis by ministers.

Oliver Dowden, the Cabinet Office minister, said there could be a risk over how sensitive government data was accessed and used by TikTok.

The app is owned by the Chinese company ByteDance and is therefore compelled to comply with China's strict national security law. There are fears that personal data could be transferred to the Chinese state.

Senior Conservative MPs said the announcement did not go far enough as ministers and civil servants would still be able to use TikTok on their personal devices.

Minutes after the announcement, Grant Shapps, the energy security minister, declared he would continue using TikTok on his personal phone. He posted a clip from the film *The Wolf of Wall Street*, in which Leonardo DiCaprio, portraying a New York stockbroker, declares he is "not f***ing leaving" and the "show goes on".

Shapps said: "I've never used TikTok on government devices and can hereby confirm I will NOT be leaving TikTok anytime soon!" A spokesman for Shapps said the app, which has about 9 million active users in the UK, is a vital way in which MPs can connect with the public. "Grant … believes security measures, like not sharing location permission, are sensible," the spokesman said. "However, he is concerned that representatives of the people who deliberately choose not to engage with the public on the platforms that they actually use are unlikely to continue to represent these voters for long."

Sir Iain Duncan Smith, the former Conservative Party leader, urged the government to go further by also banning ministers and officials from using TikTok on their personal devices.

Dowden insisted that ministers were given "bespoke security advice" and while personal phones were used for "routine administration", substantive government business must be conducted on government devices.

Announcing the decision in the Commons, he said the ban was "a prudent and proportionate step following advice from our cybersecurity experts".

The government's decision was taken after advice from the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC), an arm of GCHQ, although there was no new intelligence that led to the move.

Ministers asked the NCSC in November to review the security implications of TikTok and other social media apps being used on government devices. The US, Canada and Australia have recently banned the app from official devices because of fears about the company's links to China. In Europe, at least seven countries, as well as the European Commission, the European Council and the European parliament, have restricted all or some of their staff from using the app on their phones.

TikTok has insisted it would refuse any Chinese state demand to hand over user data because it is hosted in overseas jurisdictions, and denies claims that members of the Chinese Communist Party sit on ByteDance's board.

A TikTok spokesman said the company was "disappointed with this decision" and argued that research had found the app did not access more data than its rivals. "We believe these bans have been based on fundamental misconceptions and driven by wider geopolitics, in which TikTok, and our millions of users in the UK, play no part."

Behind the story

The decision to ban TikTok from government devices was not prompted by new intelligence over the security concerns of its Chinese owners; it was more to do with the reality that Britain was out of kilter with its allies (writes Matt Dathan).

With Rishi Sunak under pressure from Tory MPs to adopt their more hawkish attitude to China, the lack of a ban on the app was becoming increasingly difficult to explain.

Jeremy Fleming, the head of GCHQ, has said he is not concerned about the public using the app, and the ban does not extend to officials' private phones.

But clues about the extent of concerns can be gleaned from the Czech Republic, whose security agency urged a ban on TikTok among the public and private sectors earlier this month, saying the risk of their data being shared with China was high. The lack of a distinction between private and public spheres is likely to be used by the more hawkish Tory MPs to push the government to go further.

From friends to biometrics, users divulge everything

Andrew Ellson
Consumer Affairs Correspondent

The government's decision to ban TikTok from official phones is certain to leave many users of the popular app wondering whether they should follow ministers' lead.

However, at this stage, there has been no suggestion that the government wants the public to go this far. No 10 even tried to reassure users, saying the change was a precaution and "very much about potential vulnerability of government data". Ministers, MPs and civil servants will still be allowed to have the app on their personal phones.

The principal concern is over the level of data that TikTok harvests from phones — and who has access to it. When users sign up they agree to hand over, among other things, their email address, phone number, date of birth, keystroke patterns, location information, app activity, contacts list, search history, biometric data and information from other social media accounts.

Last year TikTok announced an update to its privacy policy that would give Chinese employees access to this data, fuelling fears that the app is an instrument of the Chinese Communist Party.

Concerns have been raised that the Chinese state could use TikTok to spy on users, or use the data to craft misinformation campaigns to destabilise the West. However, the data that TikTok harvests is not necessarily much different from that taken by other social media apps and no actual evidence has emerged of the Chinese state using or even accessing the information.

The firm denies providing British user data to the Chinese government, and says only its engineers in China have access. It says the biometric data is used for filters, effects and safety, not to identify unique individuals.

Quintagram® No 1578

Solve all five clues using each letter underneath once only

1 Always (4)
_ _ _ _

2 Top of the head (5)
_ _ _ _ _

3 Placing (7)
_ _ _ _ _ _ _

4 Rural settlement (7)
_ _ _ _ _ _ _

5 Space for waiting performers (9)
_ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

A	C	E	E	E	E	E	G
G	G	I	I	L	L	M	N
N	N	O	O	O	P	R	R
R	R	T	T	U	V	V	W

Solutions MindGames in Times2
Cryptic clues every day online

Domestic killing terms

Murderers with a history of coercive or controlling behaviour face longer sentences after the Ministry of Justice unveiled legal reforms. The changes follow a review of domestic killing sentencing by Clare Wade KC. It said sentencing at present did not acknowledge that many domestic killings followed years of abuse or controlling behaviour. Some 26 per cent of murders in England and Wales are by a present or former partner or relative. The reform will go to consultation.

Driving licence delays

Three million people experienced delays in getting driving licences because of antiquated systems, a report by MPs found. The public accounts committee said people had lost their jobs and suffered isolation and worsening mental health because of the long waits. Dame Meg Hillier, chairwoman, said: "The DVLA has to get its act together."

Kidney senator 'victim'

A Nigerian senator accused of trafficking a man to London to provide a kidney for his daughter was himself exploited, the Old Bailey was told. Ike Ekweremadu, 60, who denies conspiracy to arrange the travel of a person with a view to exploitation, was "scammed" by a London doctor, said Martin Hicks KC, defending. The trial continues.

Carers' parking blues

Helen Whately, the social care minister, has refused to promise a blue badge scheme exempting care workers from parking charges while on duty because parking is "devolved to local authorities". In a parliamentary debate, she said she would encourage authorities to "look and learn" from areas that have launched such schemes.

Coronation screenings

More than 30 public locations across Britain will show the coronation on big screens, Lucy Frazer, the culture secretary, has announced. Confirmed sites include Cardiff Castle, Belfast City Hall, Piece Hall in Halifax, Jubilee Square in Brighton and Piccadilly Gardens in Manchester. The King and Queen will be crowned on May 6.

ITV seeks contestants with baggage for middle-aged Love Island

Alex Farber Media Correspondent

She made her name as the host of the youth dating show *Streetmate* and now Davina McCall is preparing to help older parents looking for love.

McCall, 55, best known as the first presenter of *Big Brother*, will present *The Romance Retreat*, an ITV1 show in which single parents will head to a country house to seek a partner. "This is a show for single parents ... who have been through experiences — bad, moving, hard — they've had tough lives. They've got luggage but they deserve love," she said.

McCall is speaking from experience: she split from her husband Andrew Leggett after a brief marriage in 1997 and went on to have three children with her second husband, Matthew Robertson, during their 17-year union.

She revealed that she had initially pitched the "midlife *Love Island*" on the *Dragon's Den* star Steven Bartlett's podcast, The Diary of a CEO. "I've got no embarrassment about emailing a TV company and asking 'Have you thought about this? Can I present it if it happens?

"I could fill a villa with middle-aged people with the best backstories you have ever heard in your life. They've lived life. They're widows. They're people who have been through horrific divorces. They are people who have put up with somebody and decided they want to try going out with somebody the same sex as them. They'd be interesting people."

Casting is under way for participants, who must have children aged 18 or over. Single men, in particular, are needed.

According to Gingerbread, a charity, there were about 1.8 million single parents in 2019, of which 90 per cent were women. Their average age is 39.

Channel 4, which broadcast *Streetmate* from 1998 to 2001, regularly features older people on its long-running show *First Dates*.

The Romance Retreat will be screened on ITV1 and ITVX later this year.

Amanda Stavri, ITV's commissioning editor, said it would offer "heart, warmth, emotion and most importantly relatability," adding, We want to tell stories about people who have lived life but are still looking for someone to share it with."

MATT ALEXANDER/PA



Racing green Cars and bikes are lined up outside Goodwood House to honour 75 years of motorsports. The year-long celebration centres on Goodwood Motor Circuit, the racetrack that opened in 1948

Payout over student essay that did not criticise Israel

Nicola Woolcock Education Editor

A Jewish graduate who sued a university and said she was delayed from graduating because her essay did not criticise Israel has been awarded an undisclosed sum from Leeds University.

Danielle Greyman has settled her legal claim for damages without any admissions. The university agreed to the settlement on the condition it did not recognise any wrongdoing on its part.

The sociology graduate said her coursework was wrongly failed because it did not blame Israel for the crimes of Hamas against the Palestinians.

The marking of her coursework had earlier been revised to a passing grade after a successful internal appeal, and she was awarded a 2:1 degree.

However, the appeal process and remarking took more than a year and the university's confirmation of her entitlement to the degree came too late to enable her to take up a place on a master's course at Glasgow University.

Greyman was helped by UK Lawyers for Israel and represented by a barrister and solicitor who are directors of the organisation.

She said: "I hope this encourages other students to take action against institutions that do not uphold their responsibility of ensuring academic freedom and fair marking.

"This has been a long and emotionally draining process, but it is necessary that large institutions know that they will be held accountable for their wrongdoings."

Her lawyers brought a claim against the university for negligence, discrimination and victimisation.

Dr David Hirsh, senior lecturer in sociology at Goldsmiths, University of London, produced a report reviewing the marking of her coursework. He said: "This essay was not a fail."

Greyman chose "State crime and immorality" as an optional module in the final year of her sociology degree, in 2020-21, which was assessed by an essay of about 5,000 words.

With her tutors' agreement, Greyman decided to write about the crimes against Palestinians by Hamas and the contribution of the UN to these crimes.

She said she was specifically advised by academics not to discuss Israel or debate fault between Hamas and Israel since the essay was about the crimes of Hamas against Palestinians.

However, her essay was failed and the reasons given, Greyman claims, were that it did not discuss the alleged crimes of Israel and that it was too short, even though it met the required length.

Markers said: "You state you will not be including information about Israel's role in these events. It is impossible, without admitting a historical approach, to do this and achieve an accurate reflection."

The university's defence accepted that Greyman was advised not to write a causal account of the Israel-Palestine conflict, but denied that she was advised not to discuss Israel at all.

It also denied that the marking was carried out with insufficient skill and care and that the essay was marked down primarily on the basis that Israel's actions were not discussed or condemned.

The university also denied that the markers were influenced by any prejudice or hostility against Israel.

The University of Leeds said: "We strenuously deny the accusation of antisemitism. The university has a zero-tolerance approach to antisemitism, and any form of unlawful discrimination or hate crime, and on which we follow government guidance."

Oxford's Christ Church to appoint first female dean

Nicola Woolcock
Kaya Burgess
Religious Affairs Correspondent

An Oxford college is preparing to appoint the first female dean in its 500-year history.

Christ Church said yesterday that the King had approved the appointment of the Rev Canon Professor Sarah Foot, regius professor of ecclesiastical history at Oxford University.

She is also a priest serving as a residentiary canon at Christ Church, which comprises both the cathedral of the diocese of Oxford and a constituent college of the University of Oxford.

Foot was a censor at the college during Dr Martyn Percy's deanship and has, in effect, deputised for him since his departure. She will take up her appointment in July.

Christ Church was criticised by the Charity Commission over its dealings with Percy, who left in April last year after a four-year dispute. A governance review led by the former attorney-general Dominic Grieve is under way.

The dean designate said: "It is an honour to have been appointed to this role and to work alongside the governing body to serve the students, academics, staff, chapter and congregation of Christ Church. Together, we must make a success of the governance review process and see through changes that will be necessary."

The independent review of the governance of Christ Church, chaired by Grieve, is expected to recommend changes but implementing these will require the approval of the university, the Church of England, the Privy Council and parliament.

The college said: "This is likely to be a lengthy process." Once it is complete Foot intends to stand down to allow new leadership to take Christ Church forward under new statutes.



Sarah Foot is regius professor of ecclesiastical history at Oxford

The Right Rev Steven Croft, the Bishop of Oxford, said: "Sarah combines a distinguished career as a historian, a deep personal faith and reservoirs of wisdom."

Percy received a £1.2 million payout from the college after a dispute which started over pay and evolved into a row over sexual harassment. In November, the Charity Commission issued a formal warning to the college, which spent £6.6 million trying to remove Percy.

Rising taxes to cost households

Mehreen Khan Economics Editor
Arthi Nachiappan
Economics Correspondent

Britain faces a "lost decade for living standards" and the average household will pay £4,200 more in personal taxes over the course of the parliament, leading think tanks warned yesterday in response to the budget.

The tax burden is set to rise to its highest in 70 years, according to the Resolution Foundation, which calculated that the jump in personal taxes since 2019 will have cost the average household almost £4,200 in total by the start of 2025.

The foundation praised the chancellor for his huge expansion of free childcare but warned that the big winners from the measures were richer, older workers and parents.

An older worker with about £2 million in their pension pot will get a £250,000 tax break from Jeremy Hunt's decision to abolish the pensions lifetime allowance. The think tank said that the policy, which will cost £1.5 billion a year, would help only about 15,000 older professionals to stay in the workforce rather than choose early retirement.

Jeremy Hunt justified the measure by saying that it was targeted at doctors who were forced to leave work early or incur pension penalties.

The foundation found that richer working parents would be the main beneficiaries from the decision to provide 30 hours of free childcare to children over the age of nine months from 2025 onwards. The expansion in welfare would benefit the wealthiest fifth of households with young children by £180 a week, while the poorest working families stand to benefit by £20 a week. This was partly because poorer households were already beneficiaries of at least 15 hours of free childcare.

The overall impact of higher inflation and higher personal taxes under this parliament will reduce middle-class incomes by £740 a year, and the richest fifth of households will lose £2,060, the foundation said. The poorest families will benefit from reforms to the welfare system and have an extra £420 a year to spend.

Paul Johnson, director of the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) think tank, warned that households would feel "continuing pain" during the next year as the country continues to face a lost decade for living standards. Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) projections indicate that real household disposable income, which is a measure of income after stripping out the impact of inflation, will be no higher in 2027 than it was in 2019 and "barely" higher than in 2017.

According to Johnson, "inflation may be coming down, but prices remain much higher than two years ago. Earnings haven't caught up. The freezing of income tax and NIC [national insurance contribution] allowances and thresholds will cost most basic-rate taxpayers £500 next year and most higher-rate payers £1,000.

"The OBR's optimism on the economy may not be widely shared for a little while yet," he added.

Tiny revisions to official forecasts for economic growth would push the chancellor wide of his fiscal target, analysts at the IFS said yesterday. If the official forecaster revises down its nominal growth forecast for the financial year ending 2028 by 0.2 percentage points, the chancellor will fail to meet his target to reduce debt as a share of GDP in five years, according to the analysis.

Hunt has left himself the least wiggle room of any chancellor in more than a decade to meet his target and reduce the UK's debt burden. There is a buffer of only £6.5 billion in the financial year ending 2028 for the target to be met.

The likelihood that Hunt will meet his target is a little over 50 per cent, Richard Hughes, chairman of the OBR, said in a press conference after the chancellor's budget statement on Wednesday.

The forecaster said in its report, published yesterday, that it was now "harder for this chancellor to deliver a falling path for the debt-to-GDP ratio in the medium term than it has been for any of his predecessors since the OBR was established in 2010".

Hunt set the target in his first fiscal statement as chancellor in November. British chancellors typically set targets based on debt relative to the size of the economy rather than the total level of debt. Government spending during the pandemic and the government's sharply rising debt interest bill, which now costs more than any government department other than health and social care, has helped to push up the nation's level of debt.

Johnson said: "Tax continues to rise to its highest ever level, and to much higher levels than in recent decades. Yet even with very tight spending pencilled in from 2024, debt is barely falling.

"That's because a high debt level, high debt interest payments, additions to debt that are not included in borrowing and sluggish nominal growth make it hard to get debt on a decisively downward path."

Hunt's budget, letters, page 26



Jeremy Hunt appeared on ITV's This Morning to discuss the budget yesterday, as Rishi Sunak went to St George's Hospital

Just 6% believe budget has put them in better financial position

Steven Swinford Political Editor

Only 6 per cent of voters believe that they will be better off because of the budget despite the popularity of many of the headline measures.

A poll by YouGov found that 56 per cent thought the budget — delivered on Wednesday by Jeremy Hunt, the chancellor — would not make much difference to their lives while 25 per cent thought they would be worse off.

Just under a third of voters (31 per cent) thought the budget was fair, while 33 per cent said it was unfair.

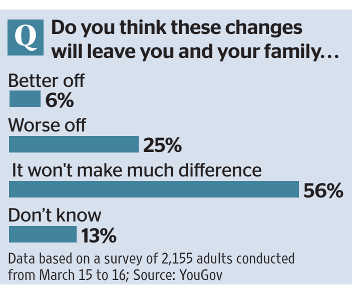
Voters' perception of the government has improved since polling in the wake of Liz Truss's disastrous mini-budget last November, but only marginally.

A quarter of voters think the government is handling the economy well, up from 19 per cent in November. Two thirds of voters (65 per cent) think the government is handling the economy badly, down from 67 per cent in November.

Hunt's personal ratings appear to have deteriorated. In November 26 per cent of voters said that he was doing a bad job, a figure that has now risen to 34 per cent. However, there was a slight increase in the number of people who thought he was doing a good job, up by four points to 26 per cent.

People's outlook for the economy remains bleak, although it has improved since November. More than half of voters (51 per cent) believe that their financial situation would deteriorate, while 12 per cent thought it would improve. The figures have improved since November, however.

Most of the measures in the budget are popular with voters. Extending the energy price guarantee for three months is viewed as a good idea by 84 per cent, and freezing fuel duty is liked by 79 per cent. The free childcare offer for one and two-year-olds is seen as a good idea by 70 per cent of voters, while one of the most contentious measures, the scrapping of the lifetime allowance for pensions, is seen as equally positive and negative, with 37 per cent saying it was a good idea and the same proportion calling it the wrong priority. A third of voters think the budget measures are affordable, and a third think unaffordable.



The Tories argue that their policies benefit the lowest-paid the most and have highlighted billions of pounds in support to help people with the cost of living. However, Labour has described the decision to scrap the lifetime allowance on pensions savings as a "gilded giveaway" for the rich.

Mel Stride, the work and pension secretary, defended the budget in the Commons on Thursday, citing an analysis of the impact it would have on different income groups. He said: "Those in the lowest income deciles proportionately benefit the most from the measures in this budget. It is thoroughly progressive."

He told MPs: "Let me slay one myth, that older people will never return to work. In fact, we know that four in ten 50 to 65-year-olds who have left their jobs since the start of the pandemic would consider returning to work."

He added: "The chancellor introduced significant encouragement to the over-50s by the changes he made to the lifetime allowance for pensions yesterday.

"And we also know that many people overestimate how far their savings and pensions will go in retirement. And so to help more people who are in their forties and fifties get a reality check about what decisions on retirement mean for their long-term wealth and wellbeing, we are digitising the midlife MoT.

"This will deliver a five-fold increase in the number of universal credit claimants who access the tool each year in jobcentres. We will also work with employers and pension providers to help nudge people to access it."

extra £4,200 by next election

KEN MCKAY/ITV/SHUTTERSTOCK; TOBY MELVILLE/REUTERS; LESLEY MARTIN/PA





in London, and Sir Keir Starmer visited a life sciences company in Edinburgh

Spotlight on pensions gives Hunt a political headache

Analysis

A bung to the 1 per cent or an essential measure to help the NHS? The political battleground over Jeremy Hunt's budget is coalescing around his decision to scrap the lifetime allowance on pension savings — a £1 billion-a-year move that has become one of the few dividing lines between Labour and the Tories (Steven Swinford and Chris Smyth write).

The chancellor's logic was simple. No one, he argued, should be pushed out of the workforce for tax reasons, least of all doctors who have found themselves in the perverse position of having to retire early to avoid incurring huge tax bills.

Scrapping the allowance would encourage doctors to keep working while incentivising "our most experienced and productive workers" to put off their retirement. Ultimately, he said, the measure would help to support the NHS and enable people to see a doctor faster.

Labour, quick to sense the opportunity, described the move as a "gilded giveaway" and said that it would abolish the measure if it won the next election.

According to the Office for Budget Responsibility, the policy will lead to only 15,000 people returning to work at an average cost of more than £70,000 each.

Labour sees parallels with Liz Truss's plans to scrap the 45p rate of additional tax — an unexpected policy that predominantly benefits the rich. That policy went down terribly with voters and tarnished the Conservative reputation for prudence. Labour hopes to use pensions as a similar stick with which to beat the government.

The public, however, appear to be divided. A YouGov poll showed that people were evenly split on whether scrapping the allowance was a good or a bad idea.

Downing Street has argued that it chose a blanket scheme — one benefiting all those with pension pots worth more than £1.07 million — because it did not have time to do otherwise. Taking a more targeted approach, it said, would have taken more than a year. "We don't think we have time to waste given the significant challenges our NHS faces."

It suggested that the approach was aspirational, arguing that it would have "broad value" in reducing the tax bills of not only consultants but also workers such as head teachers and air traffic controllers.

The British Medical Association — no particular friend of Hunt — welcomed the "decisive action" and said it had already led to doctors wanting to cancel their retirements.

However, critics of the plan pointed out that the problem facing doctors was not new, arguing that the government had had at least four years to resolve it. A more targeted approach could have been devised, they said, at a "fraction of the cost".

The policy now finds itself in a potential political quagmire. Labour's announcement that it would reverse the government's decision has led to concerns that far from encouraging more doctors and professionals back into the workplace, it could in fact lead to more retiring early. Experts believe that people might pile money into their pensions in a "gold rush" before taking early retirement before the next election to avoid incurring penal levels of taxation.

It also presents a political headache for the chancellor. In a budget that included huge giveaways to help people with the cost of living — £6 billion on freezing fuel duty, £3 billion on energy bill support and a multibillion package of free childcare — much of the debate is focused on the relatively narrow issue of the lifetime allowance.

Case study

Alan Miles stopped contributing to his pension three years ago, after hitting the lifetime allowance. He is now planning to add to it again after a radical reform to the pension rules announced in Jeremy Hunt's first budget (Ali Hussain writes).

Miles, 65, who is the managing director of a haulage firm, had been contributing to a defined benefit pension until his company stopped providing the scheme 12 years ago.



He has since built up a separate retirement fund using a self-invested personal pension, which is worth about £650,000. This, combined with his defined benefit pension, took him above the lifetime allowance.

Miles, from Scawby in north Lincolnshire, said the government reforms meant that he may continue to work for longer than he had planned to take full advantage of the new allowance.

"When I stopped making pension contributions, I put any excess money into stocks and shares. I have taken full advantage of the annual tax-free Isa allowance for many years but pensions are much more efficient," he said.

Labour has said it would reverse the changes, saying they are a huge tax giveaway for the very wealthy.

"I am working on the assumption that any changes under Labour will not be applied retrospectively. A clawback is not impossible," Miles said.

Pay increase will leave high earners worse off on childcare

Henry Zeffman
Associate Political Editor

Hundreds of thousands of high-earning parents could face a childcare "cliff edge", leaving them with less money after a pay rise, experts have warned.

Jeremy Hunt, the chancellor, announced in his budget on Wednesday that he was extending free childcare hours to the parents of one and two year olds. However, he will retain the rule under which the entitlement is available only to families where no parent earns £100,000 or more.

It means that the government is significantly expanding one of "the most severe distortions you will ever see within a tax and benefit system", the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) said.

A parent with two children under the age of three would be better off earning £99,000 than if they had an income amounting to £134,000, the think tank said.

Christine Farquharson, a senior research economist at the IFS, said: "There's a huge region here where parents would either refuse a pay rise or more likely make changes to their pension contributions to try and … retain those quite valuable entitlements."

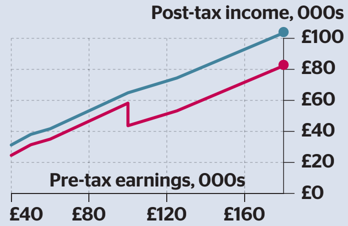
Dan Neidle, a tax expert, said: "You may say we shouldn't care about people earning £100,000. You're wrong. Doctors, IT consultants, air traffic controllers … if we are deterring them from working additional hours then that's a big problem.

"The intention of [Hunt's] pension reforms was to remove a barrier to senior doctors coming back to work. But the way the childcare schemes have a hard stop at £100,000 risks creating a much more serious new one."

It is not known exactly how many parents will now be affected by the cliff edge, but the IFS estimates that there are up to 200,000 parents of children aged one to four who have incomes before pension contributions of £100,000. Moreover, the £100,000 threshold is frozen, rather than rising annually in line with inflation, meaning that the number affected is rising every year.

Taking a hit

Post-tax income without childcare expenses and minus expenses for 40 hours of childcare for two children



Data for England only. Source: Institute for Fiscal Studies

However, some of this group will not use childcare, or will have incomes high enough that they are not adversely affected by the cliff edge.

From April next year all working parents of two year olds in England will be able to access 15 hours per week of free childcare.

From the following September the 15-hours of childcare will be extended to children from nine months old. The full 30-hour entitlement for under-fives will come into force from September 2025.

In the Commons yesterday George Eustice, a former environment secretary, said the reforms were "only half a policy", and more should be done to enable parents, and particularly mothers, to stay at home to look after their young children if they wished.

He said: "The truth is that many mothers and parents return to work because they can't afford not to, because there is a relentless cultural pressure that suggests they must and because they have concerns about losing their footing on the career ladder.

"I think it is actually a sorry state of affairs that our society does not value motherhood more than it does and that the term 'stay-at-home mother' is today almost a derogatory term."

Eustice called for a transferable tax allowance, under which "a partner who chooses to stay at home and care for that child could have their tax allowance transferred to the working member of the household so that they could afford to have one of the parents stay at home and look after the child".

PM urged to resurrect 'tens of thousands' migration pledge

Matt Dathan Home Affairs Editor

Rishi Sunak is under pressure from his ministers to set a timetable for reducing immigration after official forecasts were upgraded to predict that annual net migration would settle at 245,000 in the long term.

The prime minister's spokesman reiterated Sunak's pledge to reduce overall migration but refused to give a specific timeframe or number. However, a minister speaking anonymously to The Times said the next Conservative election manifesto should bring back the pledge to reduce net migration to tens of thousands. They said the party should commit to a "long-term aspiration" to reduce immigration to below 100,000.

The minister accepted that this would be a "tough task", given net migration hit a record high of 504,000 last year. They are urging the party to set a sliding scale of targets, reducing it to 200,000, then 150,000 and finally below 100,000 during the course of the next parliament.

A second minister said: "Nobody ever voted to have net migration at hundreds of thousands a year, that's never gained a democratic mandate. There are obvious economic benefits and it should be for each party to make the case for what level immigration should be at the next election. Immigration has an economic, societal and cultural impact."

Downing Street insisted the government had reduced the "baseline" net migration figure in the UK since the last election. The prime minister's spokesman said net migration stood at 270,000 in 2019, higher than the 245,000 level that the Office for Budget Responsibility has estimated in the long term.

The Tory MP Peter Bone, an arch-Brexiteer, said he was relaxed about the OBR's forecast of net migration settling at about 245,000 because through the post-Brexit points-based immigration system the government could control the numbers.

He said: "It shows Brexit is working because what we've always said as Brexiteers is we want to take who we want from around the world. That's what our system allows — we have a points-based system to achieve that.

"Brexit was never about eliminating immigration, it was about controlling immigration of the people we need. If we're bringing in nurses to help out the NHS, most people would say that's a good thing to do. It's good that people are coming to the country to be educated because they pay for that."

Suella Braverman, the home secretary, will travel to Rwanda at the weekend to reaffirm Britain's commitment to the deal to deport illegal migrants to the African country. She is expected to meet her ministerial counterparts and visit accommodation sites to assess the preparedness of Rwanda to take in migrants who arrive in the UK illegally.

Yesterday Leo Varadkar, the taoiseach, said Britain's hardline policies against illegal migrants had led to an increase in people seeking asylum in Ireland. He said: "Anything that the UK does in relation to migration or border controls impacts on us."





Fine line Ben Wallace, the defence

Brexit vote to be held on day of Johnson grilling

Henry Zeffman
Associate Political Editor
Patrick Maguire Red Box Editor

Rishi Sunak will hold a vote on his new Brexit deal on Wednesday, facing down Eurosceptic concerns on the same day that Boris Johnson appears before MPs investigating his statements on Downing Street parties.

The prime minister will put the Stormont brake, one of the pivotal features of his Windsor framework, to a vote in the Commons after prime minister's questions. The brake is designed to give Northern Irish politicians a way of blocking new EU laws from coming into effect in the province.

Johnson said this month that he would find it "very difficult" to vote for Sunak's deal because "this is not about the UK taking back control". He argued that the EU was trying to use Northern Ireland to keep the whole of the UK in the regulatory orbit of Brussels.

The European Research Group of Brexiteer Conservative MPs, many of them among Johnson's most committed supporters, will receive the verdict of its so-called star chamber of lawyers before Wednesday's vote.

Some Conservative MPs will also be looking to the verdict of the Democratic Unionist Party. Three of its eight MPs have said they do not support the agreement but Sir Jeffrey Donaldson, the party's leader, has been more positive while indicating he needed changes to win his support. A senior Whitehall source said they expected Donaldson and the other four DUP MPs who have not yet expressed a definitive view to abstain in the vote.

In any event, Sunak has signalled that he is not willing to change the deal.

Labour have said they will vote for the deal, meaning that it is all but certain to pass. However, a significant Conservative rebellion could be politically risky for Sunak.

The vote will take place potentially at the same time as Johnson is being questioned by the privileges committee. He will be defending himself against allegations that he was in contempt of the Commons by misleading MPs about lockdown-breaking gatherings in Downing Street. The former prime minister has insisted he did not deliberately mislead MPs.

Sunak's Windsor framework was backed by Sir Tony Blair. Appearing before the Northern Ireland select committee to mark the 25th anniversary of the Good Friday agreement, Blair said the Windsor framework was "the best I think you can do with this".

He told MPs: "My reason for supporting what the government and this prime minister has done on the Windsor agreement is that I think it represents the most practical way forward."



TAKASHI AOYAMA/GETTY IMAGES

secretary, inspects a guard of honour with his Japanese counterpart, Yasukazu Hamada. The pair held talks in Tokyo yesterday amid growing tensions in the region

Sunak vows to boost Ukraine on battlefield

Henry Zeffman

Rishi Sunak promised yesterday to give Ukraine the support it needs to "change the battlefield equation" in a conversation with President Zelensky.

In his latest phone call with the Ukrainian leader, Sunak assured Zelensky that the UK and other countries would "ensure Ukraine received the defensive equipment it needed", a Downing Street spokeswoman said.

In the past week Sunak has met the leaders of France, the US and Australia, with the war in Ukraine featuring prominently in their discussions.

Downing Street said that Sunak "reflected on his discussions" with other leaders, before adding that "it was vital Ukraine had the capabilities to change the battlefield equation as soon as possible".

It came as Britain announced that it would acquire artillery systems from Sweden to replace equipment it has supplied to Ukraine.

Ownership of the first 14 Archer self-propelled guns will be transferred to the British Army this month under the terms of the government-to-government agreement.

They will provide an interim replacement for the 32 AS90s which the UK has donated to the Ukrainian forces.

Designed and built by BAE Systems Bofors in Sweden, the Archer has double the maximum range of the AS90, greater operational mobility, greater availability and reduced time into action, according to the Ministry of Defence.

Ben Wallace, the defence secretary, said: "This agreement with a close European ally will sustain the British Army's requirements until the longer-term mobile fires platform comes into service — a programme we are working hard to accelerate."

Quentin Letts

Prophet Blair preaches to a dwindling flock

Political Sketch



Norma Desmond glided along the cloisters once more, bestowing smiles, spine erect and chin lifted, yet possibly wondering where the crowds had gone. "There was once a time in this business when I had the eyes of the whole world."

One talks, in fact, of Sir Tony Blair, who revisited Westminster to give testimony to the Northern Ireland select committee. The great actor arrived in a motorcade and alighted with bodyguards. The suit was Savile Row quality. No coat. Stars don't wear coats.

Two interns spotted the old hoofer, did a double-take and giggled, saying: "Wasn't he Tony Blair?" A clerk was outside the committee room and almost dropped a curtsy. Simon Hoare (C, North Dorset) scuttled out, gaseous, pink in the face. Hoare chairs the committee. He clasped and unclasped his chubby hands, Adrian Mole meeting Samantha Fox. "Come in, come in," beckoned Hoare, sweeping the air with Tudor bows. Blair's tortoise lips parted enough to exhale. These grovellers all look much the same to him. Always have.

The committee sought his views on Rishi Sunak's Windsor framework deal with Brussels to solve problems with the Northern Ireland protocol. Blair, right, expressed support for the framework and thereby for Sunak, but he was cautious on the latter. It would not do to state too clearly that technocrat Rishi, fluent in American, is so much more his sort of guy than that bunged-up bore Starmer. Blair did not once say Sunak's name. It was only ever "the current prime minister".

Box-office returns were disappointing. A mere five souls filled the public seats. One chap had at least asked him for a selfie beforehand. Blair posed for it graciously, doing a sort of Bill Nighy thing with his neck to make sure he looked his best. Now at the witness table, alone, his face became an expressionless mask, his hands clasped in episcopal prayer. The mullet hairdo seen during the pandemic has, thank goodness, gone. He looked wonderful, if a little yellow.



Hoare started spluttering official words of welcome. Blair did not move. Hoare mentioned "those heady days of 1997" when New Labour was the big thing. Blair gave a wan smile and started toying with Hoare in a voice now papery, almost reedy. The Good Friday agreement of 1998 had "obviously required a huge amount of courage and leadership". It would have been harder with today's levels of Twitter. Social media were "a plague on modern politics".

Plague. If the word has a biblical feel, there was more of that when he said that "reform doesn't work without the spirit" and spoke of political parties having "followers" rather than "members". His own congregation has shrunk. After he declared he was "a unionist, by the way", there came a loud "hear, hear" from Jim Shannon (DUP, Strangford). Hoare squealed: "A new member of the Tony Blair fan club!" Blair: "I don't have a lot." A prophet without a people.

He hoped the DUP would return to Stormont because that would help stability and would strengthen the union. We heard surprisingly little of "Breggsit" but there was possibly a glint of mischief when he described Belfast as "a great European city".

Claire Hanna (SDLP, Belfast South) wondered how a referendum on a united Ireland might be "signalled or triggered". That second verb was unfortunate. Blair sensibly refused to get involved. In fact, he claimed, he seldom offered political parties advice these days. Oh! He preferred to dwell on the old days, with Paisley, McGuinness, Mallon et al. Great days. Leaders. Real leaders. "They took the idols and smashed them," Norma Desmond once said. "And who've we got now? Some nobodies."

He glanced at his black wristwatch. Time was up. More selfies. Hoare bowed and scraped. With that, Norma drifted away, back to her twilit existence among foreign despots, Davos plutocrats and Peter Mandelson's endless emails.

Councils in £3bn of debt taken over

Andrew Ellson

Two bankrupt councils are being put into special measures, with the government in effect taking full control of their operations.

Lee Rowley, a local government minister, said Thurrock council in Essex and Croydon council in south London were not complying with their "best value" duty despite jointly racking up debts of more than £3 billion.

To speed up improvements, he announced the appointment of a managing commissioner — a de facto chief executive — at Thurrock and a panel to direct the running of Croydon council.

The commissioner at Thurrock will have the power to hire and fire officials and "redesign council services to achieve value for money and financial sustainability". This is likely to be a euphemism for cuts.

Rowley also made a scathing attack of the leadership team running Slough council, which has debts of nearly £800 million, describing their attitude and failure to grasp the gravity of the problems as "wholly unacceptable".

He said there needed to be a "fundamental shift in the attitude and behaviour of the council and its leadership".



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Cost of living reins in Cheltenham

Will Humphries
Southwest Correspondent

TOM MAHER/INPHO/SHUTTERSTOCK; SEB DALY/SPORTSFILE; PAUL CHILDS/REUTERS







Lucy Stanford from Hampshire, Sheila Joyce from Limerick and Jessy Cutler from Dorset, above, and punters ready for St Patrick's Day, left. Tony Martin, the trainer, hails Good Time Jonny, the Pertemps handicap hurdle winner

The cost of living crisis appears to have hit the Cheltenham festival as the usually raucous race week has made way for half-empty curry houses and taxi ranks quiet by 2am.

Punters who have spent hundreds of pounds attending the racing at Prestbury Park appear to be heading home at the end of the day. Residents, businesses, bouncers and taxi drivers have all noticed that the usually bustling streets have grown quieter.

Sayed, 38, who works at the Kashmir Indian restaurant, pointed to his empty dining tables at 7pm when asked how his week was going. "We can take 38 covers and there are only ten people in here," he said, as a stream of racegoers walked past on their way into the centre of town. "It's the cost of living. We would expect to be busy but what can you do? Race week usually helps all the business in Cheltenham but it's already been a disastrous six months. I think by April or May a lot of places are going to go down."

Ali Orr, 20, handing out fliers in the town centre on Wednesday night, said it was the quietest she had ever seen race week. "It's still decent but it is definitely quieter," she said.

Muhammad Mahmood, 33, a taxi driver, said they would usually get customers until 6am during race week but he had to wait 45 minutes after 2am to find a fare in the centre.

"A few years back we refused people but this year we have been looking for people after 2am," he said.

The raucous reputation of race week in Cheltenham was perhaps best illustrated by a mobile digital advertising hoarding for a local solicitors' firm parked outside a string of high-end hotels and bars on The Promenade.

"Arrested or in Court? 24-hour free police station attendance." the advert told revellers staggering past.

The town's council and police have worked hard in recent years to combat the rise in antisocial behaviour and crime experienced during race week.

A "war on wee" this year includes a poster telling visitors "our town isn't your toilet" while local residents and businesses have been offered hydrophobic paint designed to cause urine to splash back on whoever is relieving themselves in public.

The council is using marshals to maintain order at popular taxi ranks, clamping down on unlicensed cabs and encouraging women to report sexual harassment on Flare, an app that allows people to contribute anonymously. Women's groups say that local people stay at home during the festival to avoid groups of drunken men walking the streets after dark.

Claire Thomas, 23, a promoter handing out fliers, said: "If I'm not working I don't go out on my own during race week. I get taxis everywhere. My friends have been sexually assaulted and jumped by groups before."

A Cheltenham council survey last year found that 75 per cent of local women "did not feel safe at night" during race week. Just under a third said they were regularly sexually harassed.

Flo Clucas, the Liberal Democrat council cabinet member for safety and communities, said "many" women responding to the survey said that they had been verbally abused or groped during race week.

"There was one incident in the past where the police got involved and they said 'get on your way' to the men, which is not what you want to hear if you are looking for assistance," Clucas said.

Maggie Stewart, director of the Gloucestershire Rape and Sexual Abuse Centre, said that women were forced to "change their behaviours" during the festival to avoid harassment and abuse.

"Women tell us they have to change their days of work, get taxis home instead of getting on to a bus. They've been assaulted by racegoers, they have been asked about prostitution, how much should they charge for their services, even though they are just minding their own business trying to get home at the end of a day," she said.

Cheltenham Festival, pullout

Bono owns up at last to love of Abba

David Sanderson Arts Correspondent

Bono has finally confessed: he is partial to a bit of Abba and may even be coming round to progressive rock.

The U2 frontman said this week that he had been too "macho" to admit to a penchant for Abba's poppy hits.

The singer said that as a Dublin teenager, starting a band with three male friends in the middle of the punk scene, he had not "had the courage to own up" to being "thankful" for the Swedes' music.

Bono, 62, whose real name is Paul Hewson, told BBC Radio 2's *Piano Room* that he could remember Abba being "the national anthem for young mothers at closing time in our local pub … *Thank You For the Music* and all that … and I would sing it. I was very thankful for the music."

He added, however, that while he had been prepared at the time to publicly admit to enjoying the disco-tinged hits of the Bee Gees, Abba could have led to his Waterloo.

"I didn't have the courage to own up to [Abba] when I was 16 and in the middle of punk rock," he said.

"I did get to the Bee Gees and was ready to own up to *Massachusetts* or *Tragedy*. These are just crazy good," he said.

"It was a bit of macho but I didn't want to own up to Abba. But I tell you what, they are just better songs. You can't be empirical about everything in art."

The Edge, U2's guitarist, confirmed they were "big fans" of Abba, adding that they were "fans of lots of great songwriters who aren't necessarily seen as very hip".

Bono added that for "great rock'n'roll there is always a pop song sensibility in the artist … even in punk it was "don't bore us, get us to the chorus".

He also revealed that the "only real thing" he and The Edge fall out over is the guitarist's "vulnerability" to progressive rock bands — but Bono admitted that he may now finally have been persuaded of the merits of the much-derided genre.

This week the band release *Songs of Surrender*, an album of 40 rerecorded tracks, some of which have been rewritten. It includes chart hits such as *I Still Haven't Found What I'm Looking For* and *With or Without You*.

"I rewrote some of the lyrics and changed some of the hooks," Bono said, adding that they "ran out of time originally, we couldn't afford to be in the studios for long".

Cricket star's toddler dies from rare form of epilepsy

Seren Hughes

The two-year-old daughter of Matt Dunn, the Surrey cricketer, has died from a form of epilepsy.

Tributes were paid by the cricket community after Dunn, 30, shared a picture of his daughter Florence on Instagram, saying: "You will forever be in my heart".

Florence had a severe form of epilepsy called Dravet syndrome which the NHS describes as "a rare, life-limiting and devastating" condition.

Dunn, who has played for Surrey since 2010 and represented England for a development side against Sri Lanka in 2011, and his wife Jessica wrote of the toddler's condition online. One post on an account dedicated to her said: "Our beautiful girl gained her angel wings and was lost to SUDEP (sudden unexpected death in epilepsy) … We will be forever so proud of you and your fight baby girl."

Alec Stewart, director of cricket at Surrey County Cricket Club, said: "We are all absolutely devastated to hear of Florence's passing and our very best wishes are with the whole Dunn family. We will provide Matt and Jessica with all the support that we can."

Other teams also sent their condolences. Essex said: "Our heartfelt condolences go out to Matt and his family." On social media, Yorkshire said: "Sending our love and thoughts to the Dunn family at this incredibly hard time."

Lift sanctions on Londongrad's last oligarch, urges jailed critic of Putin

Sean O'Neill

A Russian opposition leader is calling from his prison cell for the last of the Moscow oligarchs still living in London to be freed from sanctions.

Ilya Yashin says in a letter that he has "serious doubts about the fairness and validity" of the financial sanctions imposed on the billionaire businessman Mikhail Fridman.

Yashin, 39, said Fridman had forged links with opposition leaders, including Boris Nemtsov, who was murdered in Moscow in 2015, and was "very sceptical about the current Russian government". The letter was written in the prison where Yashin has been held since he was arrested last year after condemning the Russian army's massacre of civilians in Bucha.

It will form part of Fridman's appeals to the British government and the European Commission to be removed from sanctions lists that describe him as a pro-Kremlin oligarch.

Yashin writes: "Mikhail Fridman has never been what is usually called 'Putin's oligarch'. And even more so, he cannot be considered a warmonger or sponsor of the war.

"Fridman is a private businessman who, of course, interacted with the Russian political machinery but at the same time did not compromise himself in any way by participating in the political projects of the Russian government". Fridman, 58, is co-founder of the business group LetterOne, which owns Holland & Barrett, and the Russian Alfa Group, which operates significant interests in banking, telecoms and energy in Russia.

He was born into a Jewish family in Lviv, western Ukraine, and has invested heavily in Ukrainian businesses. Fridman was the driving force behind the Babyn Yar holocaust memorial centre near Kyiv, set up to remember the Nazi massacre of 34,000 Ukrainian Jews.

The tycoon, who has lived in London since 2014, is worth an estimated £8.2 billion but his assets have been frozen since March last year and he is allowed only limited funds. While other oligarchs have left their UK properties Fridman continues to live at Athlone House in Highgate, north London, which he bought for £65 million.

He is taking legal action to challenge sanctions imposed by Britain and the EU and in December was arrested by the National Crime Agency on suspicion "of money laundering, conspiracy to defraud the Home Office and conspiracy to commit perjury". He denies any wrongdoing.

The UK's sanctions list says "Fridman is closely associated with President Putin and is therefore associated with an individual who is involved in destabilising and threatening the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Ukraine".

In his marathon speech last month, however, Putin ridiculed oligarchs who had invested and made their homes in the West.

He said: "Recent events have clearly shown that the image of the West as a safe haven for capital was a mirage.

"Those who failed to understand this in time, who saw Russia only as a source of income and planned to live mostly abroad, have lost a lot. They just got robbed there and saw even their legitimate money taken away."





Billionaire who bestrode world now trapped in £100m mansion

An asset freeze has put Mikhail Fridman in a gilded cage but friends insist he opposes the war, writes **Sean O'Neill**

There was a time, not very long ago, when Mikhail Fridman's life was a scheduled blur of high-level meetings, business-class flights and expensive lunches.

Fridman was one of global industry's dealmakers and a man who relished the cut and thrust of the commercial world.

Not any more. Sanctioned a year ago following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Fridman's world has shrunk to encompass only his home — the Highgate mansion Athlone House — and a few streets around it.

Friends say the tycoon has become reclusive. He spends his time reading novels, watching films in his cinema room and engaging in "endless conversations" with lawyers as he challenges the sanctions imposed by London and Brussels.

With the likes of Roman Abramovich, Alisher Usmanov and Oleg Deripaska long departed, Fridman is thought to be the last of the oligarch class still living in what was once called Londongrad.

The freezing of his billions caught him and his advisers by surprise, perhaps pre-empting any plan to move



elsewhere. Fridman, 58, suddenly found his bank cards frozen and was unable to pay for food or even settle a doctor's bill.

Although his fortune is estimated at £8.2 billion by the Sunday Times Rich List, the sanctions regime limits his spending on living expenses to around £2,000 per month.

Fridman has had to go to court for the right to pay the gardeners, cooks and cleaners — predominantly Ukrainian by birth, like Fridman — who maintain Athlone House.

The authorities watch him closely. In April last year, his executive assistant Nigina Zairova — to whom he had transferred control of three companies before sanctions were imposed — was also sanctioned.

Last December, 50 officers from the National Crime Agency raided Athlone House and arrested Fridman on suspicion "of money laundering, conspiracy to defraud the Home Office and conspiracy to commit perjury".

He denies any wrongdoing and friends say the swoop was "an effort to humiliate him and force him to quit the country".

According to the EU sanctions listing, Fridman "managed to cultivate strong ties to the administration of Vladimir Putin" and is an "enabler of Putin's inner circle". The UK describes him as a "pro-Kremlin oligarch" who is "closely associated with Vladimir Putin" and whose Alfa-Bank helps support the Russian regime.

The EU even sanctioned his ex-wife Olga Ayziman, from whom he has been divorced for 17 years and who lives in



Mikhail Fridman no longer strays far from Athlone House, north London, which he bought for £65m and renovated for £40m. Top, far right, in a meeting with Boris Yeltsin, under whose rule he made his fortune. Left, with his partner Oksana in 2013

France. Canada sanctioned her two daughters with Fridman even though they do not live there and have no assets in the country.

However, people who know the oligarch say the descriptions of him on the sanctions designations are laughable. Fridman, they say, consciously kept his distance from Putin and moved his personal life to the UK in 2014.

In his marathon speech last month, Putin seemed to single Fridman out as he mocked oligarchs who "choose to live in a seized mansion with a blocked account trying to find a place for themselves in a seemingly attractive western capital".

The stated purpose of sanctioning oligarchs was to punish them for being close to Putin and pressure them to use their influence on Putin to stop the war.

Yet it is pretty clear Fridman holds no sway over the Russian leader or his regime. Was he sanctioned, therefore, solely for the purpose of helping our politicians look tough?

Fridman made his first money selling black market theatre tickets in the Soviet era, then flourished during the wild east capitalism of Yeltsin's rule. He has always known any businessman wanting to succeed had to maintain a working relationship with the Kremlin.

But he and his partners have also been among the most open to the West. Their decision to establish themselves in the UK came after Putin returned to the presidency in 2012 after changing the electoral rules. They set up the LetterOne investment group in London and invested huge sums across western Europe. Holland & Barrett is their most recognisable business in Britain.

"Mikhail is not pro-Kremlin," said one friend. "He has never met Putin one-on-one, he stopped being a tax resident of Russia in 2015, he pays his taxes in the UK, he was even inquiring about British citizenship."

Fridman was also close to Boris Nemtsov, the opposition politician murdered near the Kremlin in 2015, and retained ties with other anti-Putin figures who have called for him to be de-listed from the sanctions regime.

He has deep personal and business ties with Ukraine. Fridman was born into a Jewish family in Lviv, a city which always had a strong anti-Soviet leaning, in 1964. His parents, now in their 80s, left the city but their apartment is playing home to refugees from the war.

Fridman continued to invest in Ukraine — including a major stake in the mobile phone provider Kyivstar — after Putin annexed Crimea in 2014. He also funded the Lviv jazz festival which had become a major cultural fixture before the invasion.

Fridman's proudest boast in Ukraine is his personal and financial support for the Babyn Yar holocaust memorial centre near Kyiv, which stands on the site where the Nazis machinegunned 33,000 Jews over two days in 1941. The centre was hit by Russian missiles in the early weeks of the invasion.

"Ask Mikhail if he is Russian or Ukrainian and he will answer Jewish," said a friend. "His Jewish identity is extremely important to him, it defines him above all else."

Fridman resigned from the Babyn Yar board as the invasion began and became one of the first oligarchs to criticise the war, albeit cautiously.

In an open letter to LetterOne employees he said he was "deeply attached to Ukrainian and Russian peoples and [I] see the current conflict as a tragedy for them both. I can only join those whose fervent desire is for the bloodshed to end".

Supporters of sanctions point out that Fridman's business partner Petr Aven has been closer to the Kremlin and was among the businessmen summoned by Putin on the day the invasion began last year.

They stress that Alfa Group, in which Fridman and Aven have major stakes, continues to play a key role in the Russian economy — in banking, telecoms and energy.

Nor does it help Fridman's cause that the lawyer advising him on his challenge to UK sanctions is Roger Gherson, who represented the Wagner Group warlord Yevgeny Prigozhin in his attempt to sue the investigative website Bellingcat. Fridman was also one of the oligarchs who made a defamation claim against Catherine Belton's acclaimed book *Putin's People*, though the action was quickly settled.

The exiled businessman Mikhail Khodorkovsky says tycoons like Fridman "are scared of falling into the gap between the two chairs on which they have been sitting for many years. Russia will block the way for them and the West will not open it."

"Mikhail is not pro-Kremlin. He pays his taxes in the UK. He was inquiring about citizenship"

Some say Fridman should not be reprieved from sanctions unless he is even stronger in his condemnation of the war. However, even those who have fiercely condemned Putin and his war — such as the banker Oleg Tinkov — remain sanctioned.

Fridman's friends say he "must be a disappointing oligarch". One added: "He's not the flashy sort, no yachts, no private jets. His house I suppose is the evidence of his 'crime' but even that is owned in his own name rather than some offshore company."

They say Fridman has nowhere to go. His opposition to the war and friendships with dissidents would make Moscow dangerous. He has an Israeli passport but no home there and no access to money to acquire one.

Instead he limits himself to Hampstead and Highgate, which has been home since he restored Athlone House to its former glory at a cost of £40 million on top of the £65 million purchase price. The father of five lives there with his partner Oksana and their three-year-old daughter.

He is said to worry greatly about the impact on his children. One of his older children, Katia, 26, found out via a Google Alert that she had been sanctioned by Canada.

The listing appears to have blocked the renewal of her visa to live and work in the United States where she has been resident for nine years.

"I don't have any ties to Ukraine or Russia yet somehow I've been labelled a supporter of the regime," she said. "Obviously the worst things about this war are happening in Ukraine on the ground, it is awful, but punishing other people who are not connected for some political reason isn't a solution."

Katia's mother, Olga Ayziman, had her EU sanctions — imposed "without notice or explanation" — lifted after six months. Ayziman says the lifting of the sanctions was a great relief, but she is concerned by what is happening to her ex-husband.

"It has been extremely hard for him psychologically — he had great faith in western institutions and democracy and individual human rights and this was really surprising for him," she said. "He could understand this sort of thing happening in Russia but he believed in individual rights here. So it has overturned his beliefs and that's been very challenging."

News

Sewage alert at 50 beaches after rain triggers spills

Clean it up
WATER CAMPAIGN

Rhys Blakely Science Correspondent

Swimmers and surfers were warned to stay out of the water at dozens of beaches yesterday after heavy rainfall led to fresh discharges of untreated sewage.

The spills were caused by downpours that followed the driest February in England in 30 years. Experts said further "unseasonably sustained" rainfall would be needed to avoid drought conditions this summer.

Sewage alerts issued by Surfers Against Sewage, a charity, were put in place at about 50 beaches. Earlier this week, they covered more than 80 beaches. The warnings indicate a heightened risk of illness if people enter the water.

An alert was also issued for the River Wharfe in Ilkley, west Yorkshire, one of only two stretches of English river to be designated as official bathing spots. Testing has shown that the water is often contaminated by high levels of fecal bacteria after rainfall.

The spills involve "storm overflows", which act as relief valves for the sewage system. These outlets are supposed to discharge excess storm water, combined with untreated sewage, directly into bodies of water during heavy or prolonged rainfall. This prevents sewage from backing up into homes, but the frequency of spills has caused public anger. Analysis has shown that many overflows spill waste in breach of the permits that regulate their use, when there is little or no rain, and before treatment works are working at full capacity.

The Times has launched the Clean It Up campaign to press for more action to improve the quality of water in rivers, lakes and beaches. It asks for the Environment Agency to be given more resources to prosecute those responsible for pollution, as well as calling for an end to the "self-monitoring system" that allows water companies to assess their own performances.

A report released by the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology showed that an unusually dry February left nearly two thirds of Britain's rivers below normal flow levels for this time of year. Sewage spills into these watercourses may pose a greater risk to wildlife and swimmers because there is less water in the river to dilute them.

The Trent in the Midlands, the Erch in north Wales and the Warleggan in Cornwall all had the lowest water levels for February since records began. The report said that without unseasonably high levels of rainfall in the coming weeks, parts of England were likely to remain in drought this summer.

The analysis echoes a warning issued by the National Drought Group last month, that the UK is just "one hot, dry spell away from drought returning", which would probably mean more hosepipe bans.

Two regions of England — East Anglia and Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly — are still officially in drought following last year's record-breaking heatwaves.

John Leyland, chairman of the National Drought Group, told a conference last week that "exceptional [weather] is becoming normal" in Britain. "Climate change and population growth will mean that we will run out of water unless we change faster than the environment," he said.

He also highlighted how water companies in England were found to be leaking more than two billion litres of water a day last summer.

On Tuesday, Alan Lovell, the new chairman of the Environment Agency, said that penalties for pollution by water companies should be a tenth of the level proposed by ministers.

It came after Ranil Jayawardena, when he was environment secretary, promised to deter water firms from illegally spilling sewage by raising the limit for civil penalties from £250,000 to £250 million. Lovell told MPs on the environment, food and rural affairs committee that he thought the right figure was about £10 million to £25 million.

Weather, page 57



Paris exhibits more allure than London

Britain's tourism industry is still waiting for Chinese visitors to return, with figures indicating a slower recovery from the pandemic than its peers (David Sanderson writes).

Visitor numbers for 2022 were more than 20 per cent down on pre-pandemic figures, with London's big art museums noting a shortfall of millions of visitors each compared with 2019.

The National Gallery recorded the biggest drop, according to The Art Newspaper's annual survey, drawing only 2.7 million in 2022 — down 55 per cent from 6 million in 2019.

In Paris, the Louvre and Centre Pompidou recorded much smaller drops, as did leading institutions in Italy, Spain and the United States, according to the annual survey which will be published in full next week.

The British Museum and Tate Modern remain among the world's five most popular museums, trumped only by the Louvre and the Vatican Museums.

However, Paris now has three attractions in the top ten, with London's National Gallery and Victoria and Albert Museum both slipping. Lee Cheshire, co-editor of the survey, said: "UK



The National Gallery has slipped in the rankings, but the Louvre, with its marble statues, right, and Centre Pompidou, top left, are still popular



TOLGA AKMEN; LOIC VENANCE/AFP/GETTY IMAGES;



museums have an advantage as they are mostly free of charge … however, we have seen access becoming increasingly difficult in the past few years, with more security checks and some museums, including the National Gallery, continuing to encourage visitors to pre-book a slot online." Bernard Donoghue, the director of the Association of Leading Visitor Attractions, said: "We are still 23 per cent down and that is almost entirely attributable to overseas visitors." He added: "Chinese visitors are significant not only in terms of numbers but also spending … we can't wait to get them back."

Rivalry cordiale

Selected rankings show visitor numbers in 2022 (and percentage change since 2022)

1 **Musée du Louvre, Paris** 7.7m (-20)
3 **British Museum, London** 4.09m (-34)
4 **Tate Modern, London** 3.8m (-36)
6 **Musée d'Orsay, Paris** 3.2m (-10)
9 **Centre Pompidou, Paris** 3m (-8)
11 **National Gallery, London** 2.7m (-55)
14 **V&A, London** 2.3m (-40)
15 **Somerset House, London** 2.3m (-17)
30 **Fondation Louis Vuitton, Paris** 1.3m (+31)
46 **Petit Palais, Paris** 1m (+14)
56 **Tate Britain, London** 0.9m (-49)

Source: The Art Newspaper (to be published in full in its April edition)

Stepmum beat boy, 3, and filmed as he died

Peter Chappell



Leila Borrington was jailed for 15 years for killing Harvey Borrington

A woman who filmed her autistic three-year-old stepson as he lay dying from a brain injury has been jailed for 15 years for manslaughter.

Leila Borrington killed Harvey Borrington by slapping him "multiple times" around the head. She had also committed two other attacks in the previous four months that left him with a broken arm and marks on his face.

Nottingham crown court was told that Borrington, 23, had lied about what had happened to Harvey, who had severe non-verbal autism, when paramedics arrived at her home near Kirkby-in-Ashfield, Nottinghamshire, in August 2021.



Borrington also delayed calling emergency services after inflicting "unsurvivable" injuries including a skull fracture on Harvey, instead sending a text message to his father reading: "Why does this happen to me?"

Passing sentence yesterday, Mr Justice Nicklin told Borrington that the history of violence against Harvey was an aggravating factor in the offence of manslaughter. He added that the cause of death "must have been a sustained violent assault". The judge also said that text messages sent by Borrington, and her immediate response after Harvey was fatally assaulted, had shown a "shocking lack of care and concern".

Borrington was found guilty last month of manslaughter and separate charges of assault and grievous bodily harm. She was acquitted of murder.

She had argued that Harvey "fell backwards" off a sofa, causing the fatal brain bleed. Harvey, who spent most weekends with Borrington, died in hospital on August 9, two days after paramedics were called and found him "deeply unconscious" and "unresponsive".

The trial was shown footage filmed by her moments after Harvey's collapse. In the video, which was sent to Harvey's father, Borrington took Harvey's arm, lifting it up and letting it drop to the floor, before continuing to film as he lay unmoving on a rug.

Before sentencing, Harvey's mother, Katie Holroyd, told the court that Borrington "knew what she had done to him" but had "chosen to lie, no doubt to try and save herself".



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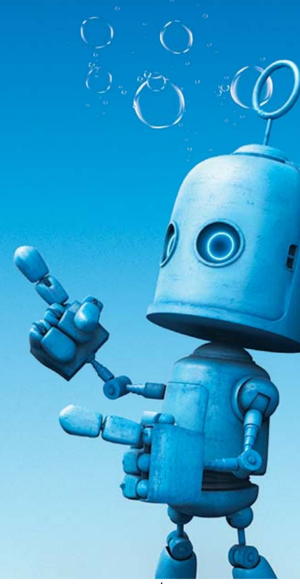
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iPhone 14 128GB	36 months	£30	£12.58	£452.64	£482.64	0%	0%	£482.64	£28	£28 + RPI announced in Feb 2023	Price A + RPI announced in Feb 2024

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Sophie Abbott with her 16-month-old son Milo, who was diagnosed with type 1 spinal muscular atrophy at five weeks old



£1.8m drug to cure baby spinal disease gets NHS approval

Eleanor Hayward Health Correspondent

Babies born with a genetic disease that usually kills them before their second birthday will now be cured by a £1.8 million drug on the NHS.

The treatment watchdog Nice has approved the use of onasemnogene abeparvovec, known by the brand name Zolgensma, for babies with spinal muscular atrophy (SMA).

SMA is a neuromuscular disease which is the leading genetic cause of infant death. It is caused by a fault in a gene called SMN1, which makes a protein that enables nerves in the spinal cord to control muscle movement.

The disease causes progressive muscle wasting, damaging children's ability to crawl, walk, sit up, breathe and swallow, and affects about 56 babies a year in England. Type 1 SMA, the most severe form of the disease, develops in babies under the age of six months, with 90 per cent dying before the age of two if left untreated.

Zolgensma, developed by the Swiss pharmaceutical company Novartis, is a gene therapy that fixes the faulty gene that is the root cause of the disease. The drug is delivered by a one-off drip into a vein, lasting for about a hour. It contains a functional copy of the SMN gene, which passes into the nerve cells and replaces the faulty gene, restoring normal function. This means babies can go on to live active lives, with minimal symptoms, and the effects of the drug are thought to be lifelong.

Zolgensma costs £1.79 million a dose at its list price, although Novartis has agreed a confidential discount with the NHS. Nice said it "is a cost-effective use of NHS resources for a treatment for a very rare condition". It has approved the drug for use only in babies who are not showing symptoms, meaning early diagnosis, within days of birth, is crucial.

Babies are tested for the disease only if they have a family history of SMA. Campaigners want all babies to be checked for it in "heel-prick" tests offered on the NHS to all five-day-old children, diagnosing nine conditions.

Laurent Servais, professor of paediatric neuromuscular disease at the University of Oxford, said: "I have seen too many families devastated by this disease, but we now have treatment options. However, waiting until the onset of symptoms is still too late. Every day we delay in finding and treating these infants, we could be responsible for a child spending their life in a wheelchair.

"There is a 100 per cent consensus among UK experts, among world experts, among patients: we need to screen to save life, we need to screen to save quality of life and we need to screen to save money."

The new drug will benefit babies with type 1 and type 2 SMA. Type 2 is less severe, appearing in babies aged between 7 and 18 months; most children survive into adulthood but need a wheelchair. Type 1 symptoms appear in the first six months, and motor neuron degeneration starts before birth and escalates quickly.

Imran Kausar, general manager at Novartis Gene Therapies UK, said: "As it is imperative to diagnose SMA and begin treatment as early as possible, we welcome the decision by Nice for this recommendation."

Case study

Sophie Abbott's son Milo was five weeks old when he had type 1 spinal muscular atrophy diagnosed (Eleanor Hayward writes).

She said: "Receiving a diagnosis like SMA type 1 is devastating. You're told your child will not live past two. If they do, they'll be disabled. It's a very difficult diagnosis to receive."

Milo, now 16 months old, had been "quite floppy" at birth but doctors were not too concerned. However, a follow-up examination revealed his reflexes were "non-existent" and he was quickly tested for the condition.

Abbott, from Hampshire, is calling for routine screening of newborn babies for SMA. If it had been available when Milo was born, he would have received an earlier diagnosis and been eligible for life-saving treatment.

She said: "Not having that on the screening panel is basically not allowing these children to live the life that they could."

Testing for the cancer gene linked to Orkney ancestors

David McCann

One in 100 people with grandparents from Orkney have a gene variant that raises the risk of developing breast and ovarian cancer.

Geneticists from the Universities of Aberdeen and Edinburgh have linked a variant in the gene BRCA1 to a historic origin in Westray in the islands. It is believed to be the first time such a geographic link has been made in the UK.

Currently in Scotland the test is available to those who know of a direct family connection to the gene or have a history of ovarian or breast cancer in their family. However, planning is under way for a trial organised by NHS Grampian and funded by a local cancer charity that will offer testing for the gene variant to anyone living in Westray with a Westray-born grandparent, regardless of a family history. If the trial works, the aim is to offer the test to everyone in Scotland with a Westray-born grandparent who wants it.

Around one in 1,000 women across the UK have a BRCA1 variant giving them a high lifetime chance of developing breast cancer and ovarian cancer.

Jim Wilson, professor of human genetics at Edinburgh University said: "The fact that one in a hundred Orcadian women carry a high-risk variant for breast and ovarian cancer highlights the value of population studies such as Viking Genes, without which we would not know this."

Scientists say 'Aha!' to saviour of the Exmoor pony

Shayma Bakht

An award-winning pony named Alan Partridge has been selected by scientific experts to save the Exmoor breed from extinction.

The 15-year-old stallion will be the first of many to donate semen to a gene bank as part of a campaign by the Exmoor Pony Society (EPS) to secure the future of Britain's oldest native breed.

Exmoor ponies have been listed by the Rare Breeds Survival Trust, a livestock preservation charity, as a priority to save. They became vulnerable after several bloodlines were lost during the Second World War, whittling the population down to only 50 ponies. Only 15 per cent of the total population of about 600 ponies are actively breeding today.

Elsinore Alan Partridge is thought to have been named after the comedy character, a tactless broadcaster portrayed by Steve Coogan. The pony is said to match Partridge's "spunky personality". His stablename, Q, is named after the *Star Trek* character.

He has sired 12 ponies in the stud book, and will donate to the national livestock gene bank this month.

Sandy Wooderson, the Suffolk-based breeder who owns Alan Partridge, was delighted that he had been chosen. "We are very proud of him," she said: "At the age of six he had qualified for the Horse of the Year Show under saddle, and has sired some beautiful stock who are now also winning in the show ring."

Wooderson's daughter Madeline Haynes, who works with her as a breeder, said: "He is a brilliant, funny boy. People love him and his name suits him. It's wonderful that the EPS are introducing such a forward-thinking initiative, which is paramount for protection of this rare breed. Learning from history, a catastrophe really could happen. We're proud to contribute to protecting this precious native pony that faces the real-life possibility of extinction, as well as safeguarding Q's rare genetic bloodline."

Nigel Hill, chairman of the Exmoor Pony Society, said he had created a scientific advisory panel "comprised of Exmoor pony experts from the fields of genetics, ecology and veterinary science" to select suitable stallions to save the "essentially endangered" breed."

The bank will use cryopreservation — freezing and storing genetic material — to ensure a viable population can be restored if the Exmoor bloodline continues to disappear. Semen has been stored from six Exmoor stallions but in sufficient doses from only three of them.

Sue Baker, an ecologist and a member of the panel, said: "[To] provide breed 'catastrophe insurance', ideally 22 additional stallions need to contribute 50 doses each. The primary aim of the project is to achieve this within two to three years. We need to commit £100,000 to the project to support the collection of genetic material and its cryopreservation. The Exmoor Pony Society is part-funding this … by contributing £50,000. We are looking to raise the additional money through fundraising, legacies and donations."

The British Horse Society began a campaign last week to ask drivers to cut their speed to 10mph if passing feral Dartmoor or Exmoor ponies. Since 2018 there have been 375 reported incidents involving equestrians on Devon roads.


Elsinore Alan Partridge is named for the comic creation

TMS

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Well, that wasn't cricket

The cricket writer Simon Wilde has written a book on the history of the England team on tour. Until 1958, they travelled to Australia by sea, preparing for the Ashes with a few weeks of deck quoits and cocktails, but some almost didn't make it out of the Mediterranean. In 1920, when they stopped at Naples, two of the team went to visit Pompeii, got stuck in traffic and had to charter a tender to pursue their departing ship. In 1885, after a trip to the Pyramids, two players were being rowed back to join the squad when the Egyptians stopped and refused to go further without extra payment. At this, George Ulyett grabbed one by the collar, threw him into the sea and proceeded to row himself. The bolshy oarsman swam alongside picking up some exotic pieces of Yorkshire slang.

The BBC Singers, who are being axed by the bean-counters as a cost-saving measure despite an exchange rate of about 24 singers to the Lineker, return to the stage today in London with a sold-out concert at St Giles' Cripplegate. At least they sing on in optimism: the concert is named after the programme's final piece: All Shall Be Well.

DESPARD MEASURES
Wilton's Music Hall, a gloriously faded Victorian theatre in east London, makes an ideal setting for a revival of *Ruddigore*, Gilbert and Sullivan's supernatural operetta about the baronets who are cursed to commit a daily crime. Like the venue, the script has been only lightly updated but Peter Benedict's evil Sir Despard is given a topical way to threaten the portraits of his ancestors, who come to life and torment him every night. "I'll send them off to the National Gallery," he says, "and let people throw soup at them."

THE MEN FROM AUNTIE
I'm not sure what the collective noun is for directors general of the BBC (A repeat? An impartiality?), but seven of the eight surviving head honchos gathered last year for a dinner to mark Auntie's centenary. "The one thing we all agreed on was it's a tough job," Greg Dyke tells The Political Party podcast. All but one. "Tim [Davie] seemed to think he'd escaped that," says Dyke, below. "Well, that disappeared last week."

After yesterday's item on the actor disturbing a surgeon during heart surgery, my mother emailed to say that when she was having a stent fitted her consultant began singing to himself. Stopping suddenly, he apologised and asked if she would like some music. "Not if it means you singing," she told him. "I'm hurt," he said and returned to his scalpel. Fortunately, he didn't then start singing Achy Breaky Heart.

FINAL STOP
Keith Johnstone, a pioneer of improvisational theatre, has died at 90. He was a man who found innovative ways to control the different parts of his brain. One phone interview about his creative process was interrupted when the technician kept hearing scratching sounds. They finally found that it was the sound of Johnstone's pencil as he did a crossword while answering questions. He explained that this helped to suppress "defensive Keith" so that "spontaneous Keith" could speak. Asked to continue the interview without pencil noises, Johnstone said he then distracted defensive Keith by remembering every bus stop between Brixham and Totnes.



PATRICK KIDD





News

TIMES PHOTOGRAPHER JAMES GLOSSOP



Valley of the Kingston An exhibition on Ancient Egypt will capture imaginations at Ferens Art Gallery in Hull, east Yorkshire, from tomorrow until mid-June

Virgin Orbit pauses mission over funding

Kaya Burgess Science Reporter
Laurence Sleator

The future of Virgin Orbit, the launch firm founded by Sir Richard Branson, could be in doubt two months after its failed attempt to send up the first satellites from British soil.

The company has announced that it is pausing operations as it hunts for funding. Employees are said to have been told that hundreds will be put on unpaid furlough, with only a skeleton staff maintaining critical functions.

Workers at Virgin Orbit, which is based in California, were informed at an all-staff meeting on Wednesday. The company said in a regulatory filing yesterday that it is "initiating a company-wide operational pause … and anticipates providing an update on go-forward operations in the coming weeks".

The firm is searching for new investment, but said: "There can be no assurance that these discussions will result in any transaction." It added, however, that it had almost finished upgrading its technology to avoid a repeat of the disaster that saw a rocket launched from Spaceport Cornwall in Newquay crash back into the Earth's atmosphere and land in the Atlantic Ocean, with the loss of all nine satellites on board.

The firm said: "Our investigation is nearly complete and our next production rocket … is in the final stages of integration and test." Dan Hart, Virgin Orbit's chief executive, said they would "proceed cautiously towards the launch" of the next rocket, which would be fitted with a more robust filter.

It had been thought that Virgin Orbit could return to Cornwall to try again before the end of the year, but this is far from certain. Other spaceports around Britain, including SaxaVord Spaceport in the Shetland Islands, are due to become operational within the next year and could beat Spaceport Cornwall in the race to achieve the first successful satellite launch from UK soil.

It is thought that operations will be paused for at least a week. Employees are due to be updated next week on the furlough scheme. Shares in the company fell by a third on Wednesday.

Louis Gardner, of Cornwall council, said: "Our focus … is to continue to grow the space cluster in Cornwall, alongside progressing relationships with spaceflight operators. We remain the only licensed spaceport in the UK and our plan is to build on that position."

A spokesman for the UK Space Agency said: "This is a commercial matter for Virgin Orbit, and we are engaging regularly with the company to understand the next steps."

Rolls-Royce of lunar reactors

Adam Vaughan

Better known for using nuclear power to sustain deep-sea submarines, Rolls-Royce has set its sights a lot higher. The British firm has received government funding to develop a micro-reactor to power a base on the moon.

While the clean, almost unlimited nature of nuclear fusion power in space has captured the imagination of sci-fi novels and TV shows, the lunar reactor would use existing fission power.

The hope is that nuclear power could substantially increase the time humans can spend on the moon. It would also be lighter and smaller than alternative power sources. However, unlike fusion, fission creates radioactive waste.

Rolls-Royce has won funding from the UK Space Agency to develop a demonstration nuclear reactor that could provide electricity for life support and communications systems for astronauts at a lunar base.

The company has previously said it wants to have the first reactor ready by 2028 in time for launch by 2030. The design has its roots in work for the company's submarine division.

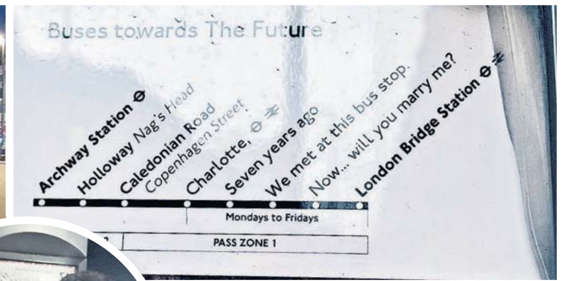
A timetable for marriage that starts at the bus stop

After missing the last Tube home, Rory O'Keeffe was consulting a map at a bus stop in May 2015 when a woman asked him: "Do I know you?" (Mario Ledwith writes).

Initially taken aback, he then recognised Charlotte Amey from a party three months earlier. Within minutes they were on a bus and nattering away. They swapped numbers and then fell in love.

O'Keeffe, 32, returned to the bus stop G outside King's Cross station when he was devising an inventive way to propose to Amey, 33. After months of planning, the comedian decided to create a new timetable for the route 17 bus with four of its stops changed to read: "Charlotte, seven years ago, we met at this bus stop. Now … will you marry me?"







Charlotte Amey and Rory O'Keeffe by the timetable where he proposed

He steered Amey, a French and Spanish teacher, to the sign after a night out last May and got down on one knee, holding a ring, as she read it. "She said yes. It took her a while because she was overwhelmed. Your name is in a bus stop, it's quite confusing," he said.

The timetable has remained in place for the past ten months, but now Transport for London is taking it down. Louise Cheeseman, director of buses at TfL, said: "We wish Rory and Charlotte a happy life together and are glad that, like so many adventures in London, it all started with a bus."

The couple are getting married in July.

Lineker believed BBC 'had consented to his immigration tweets'

Alex Farber, Laurence Sleator

Gary Lineker believed that he had a "special agreement" with the BBC to tweet about political issues pertaining to refugees and immigration, the presenter's agent has said.

Jon Holmes, who has represented the *Match of the Day* host for more than 40 years, said his client had spoken to the director-general, Tim Davie, and explained his "passionate interest" in those policy areas.

The BBC temporarily took the presenter off air for a tweet last week in which he compared the government's language on immigration to that used by Germany in the 1930s.

Holmes wrote in the New Statesman: "Gary takes a passionate interest in refugees and immigration and, as he saw it, had a special agreement with Tim Davie … to tweet about these issues."

David Jordan, the BBC's head of editorial standards, said the broadcaster has a deal with Lord Sugar that he will not tweet highly politicised statements during the 11 weeks *The Apprentice* is on air.

"He has voluntarily constrained himself on social media recently because he's presenting *The Apprentice*," Jordan told *The Media Show* on BBC Radio 4. "The rest of the time he is free, as a businessperson, to say what he wants."

Jordan added that Sugar's tweet in 2019 urging people to vote Conservative would not have breached the current guidelines because it was sent at a time when *The Apprentice* was not on.

Any "special agreement" with Lineker could present the BBC with difficult questions from other high-profile talent about its expectations.

One agent said it was "totally ridiculous" that presenters who are unlikely to influence how people vote had to take part in impartiality training.

A BBC executive added that it was possible that Lineker's belief was the result of a "misconstrued conversation".

"No one has special dispensation for anything here," the executive said.

Holmes said he was summoned to BBC offices on Friday and told them that taking Lineker off the air would cause problems.

"In my view, the BBC did not have to put itself in that position and publish its statement," he said. "It's best not to feed the beast. You starve it — that's how you achieve a quick resolution to problems like these."

According to a source close to Lineker, he is pleased the furore is starting to blow over, after reporters camped outside his home for several days. "He is keeping his head down and genuinely looking forward to getting back on the TV at the weekend," the source said.

Lineker will front BBC1's FA Cup coverage of Manchester City v Burnley on Saturday and Brighton & Hove Albion v Grimsby Town the following day.

Jail for obsessive fan who harassed weather presenter

Jonathan Ames Legal Editor

A former company director has been jailed for bombarding a BBC weather presenter with sexual messages and telling her that she had "nice legs".

A magistrate sentenced Timothy O'Brien, 55, to 17 weeks in prison and issued a restraining order after he was found to have persistently harassed Alexis Green before being arrested in January.

The local weather presenter on BBC South told the court that O'Brien had left her feeling "physically sick" after he sent her 115 messages, 33 videos and 13 photographs via social media. Southampton magistrates' court heard that in the videos O'Brien, an aviation engineer, told the weather presenter that he wanted to "feel her" and boasted about the size of his penis.



Alexis Green was forced to take time away from work

O'Brien also sent messages saying he wanted to have sex with Green, adding that she had "nice legs, so should be on the news more often".

Green said the harassment had made her feel less confident in "every aspect" of her life and forced her to take time off work, adding: "No one should have to tolerate this."

O'Brien was initially arrested on suspicion of stalking. He admitted an alternative charge of harassment without violence.

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Blaze hits hotel that housed refugees

A historic hotel that was housing Ukrainian refugees caught fire last night, causing the evacuation of more than 30 people, including children (Laurence Sleator writes).

An estimated 70 firefighters and 14 fire engines were called to the 400-year-old grade II listed Angel Inn, in Midhurst, West Sussex, at about 1am. Four people were treated at the scene but none required hospital treatment.

Firefighters said a "significant fire" had broken out at the property next door and spread to the hotel, which is said to have once hosted the writers HG Wells and Hilaire Belloc.

A spokesman for West Sussex Fire & Rescue Service said there appeared to be "no suspicious circumstances surrounding this fire, but our investigations are ongoing".

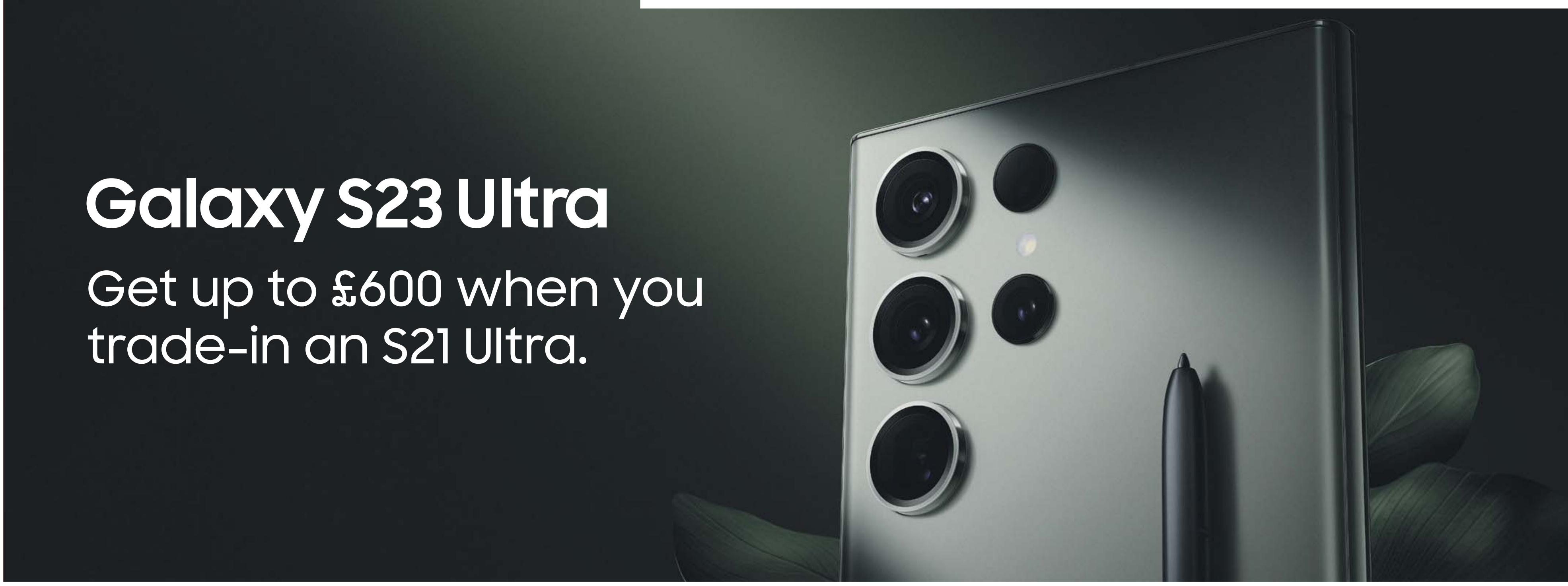
Hilton Holloway, who lives opposite, said: "There were a number of Ukrainian refugees [there]. I spoke to one young woman who seemed relatively calm."

The hotel in the heart of the South Downs was originally a coaching inn and is next to a former sweet shop, now a charity shop, which is thought to have been the building that first caught alight. Part of a small, independent restaurant called the Olive and Vine was also damaged.

Andrew Ashton-Smith, a sales engineer from nearby Petworth, said: "We've been helping Ukrainians since the start of the war, gathering aid and shipping tonnes and tonnes of stuff from West Sussex to Ukraine. We will dip into what we've already collected to help. It has been a harrowing set of events for them."



The fire is thought to have started



Fears over rush to acquire ebola-level pathogen labs

Rhys Blakely Science Correspondent

A global rush to build laboratories secure enough to handle the deadliest pathogens has raised safety concerns.

A report has revealed a sharp rise in the number of labs being built to the maximum containment standard, known as BSL4, required to work with diseases such as the ebola and Marburg viruses.

It shows that seven countries — including Côte d'Ivoire, Saudi Arabia, Kazakhstan and the Philippines — are pushing ahead with building their first BSL4 labs, and that others, including China and India, are expanding their networks.

The findings will fuel concerns that countries with poor oversight measures, little transparency and limited experience are embarking on potentially high-risk research.

The analysis also shows that about three quarters of the existing labs are in densely populated areas, increasing the risk of spread if a pathogen escapes.

Dr Filippa Lentzos, reader in science and international security at King's College London, an author of the report, said: "We are seeing countries that have never had labs before now wanting to build these facilities, and they don't have the legislative frameworks to do so safely and responsibly and securely. And that to us is a concern."

The best known BSL4 lab is probably in Wuhan, the Chinese city where the coronavirus was first detected. Researchers at the Wuhan Institute of Virology used it to study coronaviruses collected from bats. Although no conclusive evidence of a lab leak has been found, it remains a viable theory of what caused the pandemic.

The UK has BSL4-equivalent labs at nine sites, including Porton Down, the government's chemical and biological weapon research centre.

The latest report identifies 69 BSL4 labs around the world that are operational, being constructed or planned.

Singapore and Spain are among countries with plans to build their first BSL4 labs and are highlighted in the report for having no system to track research that could be used for weapons or misapplied in other harmful ways.

"The question is, how many of these labs do we need?" Lentzos asked. "We need to make sure we can operate safely with dangerous viruses and bacteria," she said. "But it's not cost free; there are risks to building these facilities, to doing this kind of work … Perhaps we should think about having more regional hubs of labs rather than each country having their own maximum containment facility."

Alice Hughes, associate professor in the school of biological sciences at the University of Hong Kong, who did not write the report, said: "Global standards for such facilities and monitoring should be in operation to [reduce] risk."



High horse Jason Carver on Start Me Up won the Kiplingcotes Derby, England's

HILTON HOLLOWAY/PA



in a charity shop before spreading to a restaurant and the historic Angel Inn

Council insists it was 'kept in dark' as more trees are felled

Will Humphries

A fresh row over tree-felling has erupted after locals in Northamptonshire discovered that 61 limes were to be chopped down to gain access to a new dual carriageway.

It came after Plymouth council sparked outrage this week by felling 110 trees under cover of darkness hours after the Tory council leader gave a regeneration project the go-ahead.

Members of North Northamptonshire council said developers had kept them in the dark about the extent of the tree-clearing in Wellingborough until a site inspection on February 9, ten days before work was due to begin. Despite protests from residents, who said a tree-protection order was in place, 15 were cut down by Vistry Group, the developers, before work was paused.

The tree-felling is to allow access to the site of a new dual carriageway leading to the £1 billion Stanton Cross residential and commercial development.

Four arrests were made during protests against the works on March 2 and Vistry Group agreed to halt work until after it had held a public consultation with residents.

Locals have criticised North Northamptonshire council for its "lack of response" and called its actions "disgraceful".

In a statement, the council said the work was "part of consented plans that we are required to carry out as part of the planning permission". It added: "They are needed in the short term to facilitate the diversion of essential utilities, including a high-pressure gas main, water, fibre-optics and electricity, and in the longer term [they] will boost the road network around the town, improving access in and around Wellingborough [and] bringing major economic and lifestyle benefits."

The Plymouth works were stopped by a High Court injunction served by campaigners at 1am on Wednesday, by which time all but 16 of the trees due to be felled in the city centre had been cut down.

The Woodland Trust said it was "appalled" at the scale of the destruction of mature trees and "the use of secretive night-time operations". Andy Egan, from the trust, said: "Retaining existing trees should be a priority concern in approving new development projects."

A council spokesman said: "For reasons of public safety and impact on the city centre and given the size of the tree machinery, we scheduled the works to be carried out at night with as few people around as possible."

Give council vandals the chop — not trees, Martin Samuel, page 24

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DANNY LAWSON/PA



oldest race, first run in 1519

Stop saying mother and father, Oxfam tells staff

George Styllis

Oxfam has instructed staff to drop the words "mother" and "father" from their vocabulary and replace them with "parent" when describing family roles.

The charity said that allowances should be made for trans families that might not identify with the conventional roles of a man and woman in parenthood and that in such cases "parent" would be more appropriate.

The word parent describes "the role in raising children without directly ascribing gendered roles", Oxfam said.

However, "If trans parents have a preferred specified gender role, such as 'mother' or 'father', this should be respected. If unsure, it is more inclusive to use 'parent'."

The guidelines were issued in a 92-page *Inclusive Language Guide* made public this week. In it the charity gives what it says are sensitive alternatives when discussing physical disability, race, migration and mental health.

Terms it encourages staff to use include "is affected by" when describing people with a health problem and a "person with short stature" in place of dwarf. Using the term "is affected by", the guide says, avoids defining people by their health issue and thus avoids negative connotations. It should be used in place of "is afflicted with, suffers from, is a victim of".

Maya Forstater, 49, a women's rights campaigner who was sacked for saying people cannot change their biological sex, mocked the guide on Twitter. Posting screenshots of it, she said that the word mother was not meant to be inclusive: "It describes a specific thing. That's what words are for."

Responding to Oxfam's advice on using "breastfeeding people" to remove any association with women or mothers, Forstater posted a sad smiley.

Oxfam said: "This guide is not prescriptive but helps authors communicate in a way that is respectful to the diverse range of people with which we work. We are proud of using inclusive language; we won't succeed in tackling poverty by excluding marginalised groups."


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Comment

Sunak and Starmer pin hopes on Aussie rules

Labour sees lessons down under on how to eject a tired government but Australia's election also offers hope for Tories

Katy Balls



@KATYBALLS

One of the big misconceptions in British politics is that we are most obsessed with the Americans. Granted, the number of parliamentary staffers with the title "chief of staff" even if they're working for a backbench MP points to the *West Wing* effect. But the country that really sets the tone in Westminster these days is Australia.

It's not just matters of security, like the Aukus submarine deal, or trade that interest both parties here about our antipodean ally. It's winning elections. The Tories were first at it, importing the strategist Lynton Crosby, who among other things masterminded David Cameron's surprise 2015 majority, followed by his right-hand man Isaac Levido, credited with the success of Boris Johnson's 2019 campaign. Both have worked on successive campaigns in Australia, for the centre-right Liberal party, and the UK.

They are seen to bring a required focus — and bluntness — to campaigning. From the "dead cat" distraction strategy to running a focused "barnacles off the boat" campaign, the tricks of the British trade are often made in Australia. Rishi Sunak is due to continue this tradition, with Levido (who helped the prime minister to define his five priorities for 2023) expected to run a 2024 election campaign. The irony is that Sir Keir Starmer thinks his own path to victory can also be found in Australia.

Last year Scott Morrison was thrown out after nearly ten years of the conservative Liberal party in power. His government looked exhausted and was accused of resorting to culture wars in the campaign. A weary Australian public was turned off and Labor's bland-but-amiable leader, Anthony Albanese, sailed in with a safety-first campaign that focused on the economy. Starmer praised this on social media as "a positive campaign" that ended "almost a decade of stale Conservative rule". A lesson in the need for a change.

Since then Labour has not stopped taking notes. Last month Paul Erickson, national secretary of the Australian Labor Party, Zoomed into Labour HQ to offer advice on winning from the centre — having already previously addressed the shadow cabinet. A senior Labour source has described the parallels between UK and Australian politics

> Since Albanese won, the Labour Party hasn't stopped taking notes

as "amazing". The shadow education secretary, Bridget Phillipson, recently went down under on a fact-finding mission, citing the Australian party's promise of high-quality childcare as "a key part of how they won".

Yet if Starmer is learning Aussie rules, the Tories can see his tactics. It was quite clear Starmer was all set to pledge more childcare, including it in his five missions for a Labour government. So the Tories gazumped him in this week's budget, promising that every working parent of under-fives would have access to thirty hours of free childcare a week by 2025. A distant deadline, to be sure, but Conservative MPs think it will be harder for Labour to attack them on the issue. "It's generous. Labour could go further — but it would be very expensive," a minister says.

In the Corbyn era, Labour would simply have relied on extra borrowing to outbid the Tories. But Rachel Reeves, the shadow chancellor, is sensitive to this and is instead fond of "switch" spends. Any shadow minister demanding funds is asked what they would cut to pay for it. Labour could go to the polls offering to hire more police or spend more on climate change — but both have the potential to be very costly. One shadow cabinet member worries that Labour will have a tougher time at the election as they are trying to balance two potentially conflicting messages: that it's time for a change but that change is not risky.

What's more, there is one advantage Australian Labor had that Starmer cannot replicate: running against a tired and unpopular prime minister. After its victory, Albanese's party published an assessment of why it won: "Although several factors contributed to the outcome, the unpopularity of Scott Morrison and his government was the most significant." His vulnerabilities ranged from personal traits such as "political dissembling and an inclination to mislead and lie, commonly blaming others to avoid responsibility", and a "failure to understand and empathise with the experience of women".

Not so long ago Starmer had such a bogeyman to define himself against, but no more. "Sunak is the strongest weapon the Tories have," sighs one senior shadow cabinet member. "We can attack the policies, but not really the man." The Tories are led by a smooth-talking, almost comically polite teetotaller more likely to be criticised for drinking too

RICK RYCROFT/AP



Scott Morrison's personal unpopularity was a significant factor in his defeat

much sugar than being mired in debauchery and scandal.

This changes the calculation. One of the current criticisms of Sunak is that he is popular with some voters who will never actually vote Tory — Remainers who like his manner but won't forgive Brexit. But the flipside is that it could make anti-Tory tactical voting — a big factor in Australia, where independent "Teal" candidates campaigning on climate change dented the Liberal vote — less likely.

On the recent Tory MP awayday in Windsor the guest speaker was the former England cricket captain Andrew Strauss, who beat Australia in the Ashes. Levido gave his post-mortem of Morrison's defeat — a campaign he ran: the problems were fixable, he said, but the Liberal party left it too late. "The moral of the story was Scott Morrison's party exhibited traits of the Tory party last year," one attendee recalls. "Infighting, mistakes over lockdown and a sense of looking inward not outward." By the time Morrison's party realised this they didn't have enough time to fix it. Levido's message to the Tories: refrain from infighting and regicide, stay united, and there's time.

But not too much time. In No 10, after a good few weeks for Sunak, a spring election next year is viewed as

> Plan is to have Sunak front and centre, asking for a first proper term

appealing. The Office for Budget Responsibility expects inflation to fall to less than 1 per cent in May next year, below the Bank of England's target and well past Sunak's pledge. The plan is to have Sunak front and centre. "We're not asking for a fifth term for a Tory government," a senior government source says. "We're looking for the first proper term of a Rishi government."

It's still a big ask — voters won't quickly forget the dysfunction of the past year, and delivering Sunak's promises will be crucial to any chance of improving the party's fortunes. But there's reason to think the lessons from Australia offer as much hope for the Tories as Labour. It's whether Tory MPs choose to take them.

Katy Balls is political editor of The Spectator

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Act now to resuscitate Britain's life expectancy

We have fallen behind our G7 peers, thanks to poverty, obesity and a struggling health service

Emma Duncan



As chancellors are bound to, Jeremy Hunt prefaced his budget with a few nuggets of global one-upmanship. The World Bank says Britain is the best place in Europe to do business. Britain comes third in the list of places in which global chief executives would like to invest after America and China. It's the second country in the world to have a stock of foreign direct investment worth $2 trillion.

But the opinions of big business cheeses and the wads of dollars they bring into the country are of no significance unless they improve people's lives. So I paid more attention to a couple of pieces of research published in the past week that provide evidence of some pretty bleak one-downsmanship that's been going on in this country in recent decades.

According to a paper by academics at Oxford University and the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, Britain has dropped from 7th place to 29th in global life-expectancy rankings since 1952. That's not just because places such as South Korea and Taiwan have got richer: it's also because Britain has fallen back among its peers. Seventy years ago, Britons had longer life expectancy than anywhere in the G7. Now people in France, Germany, Italy, Canada and Japan live longer than we do. Only America, among our peers, is doing worse. Our relatively bad pandemic experience does not explain the decline: Britain had already slipped in the ranking before Covid-19 hit, and has since returned to its pre-pandemic trajectory.

The Economist, meanwhile, calculated that this decline has led to a quarter of a million early deaths since 2011. That shocking number, which excludes pandemic-related deaths, is based on a comparison between Britain and its neighbours. From 1980 to 2011, life expectancy rose fast across our peer group. On the European mainland it has continued to increase, albeit at a slower rate; in Britain it has stagnated. As a result, a quarter of a million people died earlier than they would have if Britain had continued to follow the same path as its European peers. That's not just old people slipping away a few years early: more middle-aged and younger people are dying than otherwise would have.

> Among Europeans, only the Maltese are fatter than Britons

There are three likely culprits. One is poverty, which undermines people's health in a mass of ways — through mental illness, a lack of education about healthy ways of living and rotten housing, for instance. The death last year of Awaab Ishak, a two-year-old who was killed by the damp in the flat in which he lived, was a horrific illustration of that last factor.

Poorer Britons are worse off than are the poor in comparable European countries. That's a big reason why the country performs badly in the ranking: it's not because life-expectancy has stagnated across all incomes but because, while it has risen among the rich, it has fallen among some poorer groups. It is, for instance, 18 years higher for men in the richest part of Kensington (92) than it is in New Cross Gate (74), a poor part of London only six miles to the east.

A second possible culprit is poor public health — the chronic diseases, such as obesity, that you can't treat in hospital but that kill people early. Obesity is one league table on which Britain ranks highly, beating all our European peers. Only the Maltese are fatter than we are.

The third factor is our health service. We all know it has struggled with backlogs since the pandemic, but it has been serving Britons poorly far longer than that.

As with life expectancy, comparison is the best way to measure health service performance, and the NHS comes out badly. Our cancer survival rates — and these are from a study of 37.5 million patients in 2018 suffering four different sorts of cancer — are worse not just than our neighbours', but worse even than China's. Its breast cancer survival rate is about the same as ours, its prostate cancer survival rate is worse and its lung and stomach cancer survival rates are better. And that's a country in which only half of doctors have university degrees.

The good news is that the problem is addressable. Jeremy Hunt's budget is a start. The best way to raise people out of poverty is to get them in work, and Hunt has taken steps to do that, by making it easier for those on disability benefits to work and by providing childcare for pretty much everybody except the very well-paid. Changing planning rules so that we can provide decent, affordable housing is also essential.

We need public health campaigns to deal with chronic problems such as obesity. Slashing them during the Tories' austerity years was a mistake. The anti-smoking campaign helped to get rates down, and a study on coronary deaths in 1981-2000 showed that money spent on preventing illness was four times as effective in saving lives as money spent curing people.

Most of all, we need to improve the NHS. We probably need to spend more — Germany and France, for instance, where life expectancy has risen faster than in Britain, spend 45 per cent and 17 per cent more per person on health than we do. But it's not just about money. Australia, Belgium, Japan and Finland, which spend about the same or less on health than we do, have better cancer survival rates.

We can't go on pouring money into the current model of health service. Be it by breaking up the Leviathan along regional lines or by creating an insurance-based system, we need to make it work better. Otherwise hundreds of thousands more Britons will die before their time.

THUNDERER

We must protect local news — it's vital for democracy

Danny Cammiade

Local journalism is vital and our readers know this. With an audience of 40 million adults in print and digital every month, local news brands continue to maintain huge reach across Britain.

They are personal in a way no other news medium is: campaigning on issues close to people's hearts and pushing for meaningful change, fostering open democracy and debate. Local journalists devote hours to attending court hearings and local authority meetings to scrutinise, report and expose wrongdoing. They care about and participate in the communities they serve, covering sports and collaborating with businesses.

Research shows that 81 per cent of Britons trust their local news media, a figure that has increased in recent years. Yet the industry faces unprecedented challenges. It has never been more urgent for local journalism to receive the support it needs to innovate and flourish. Without it, we risk social media — where fake news can go unchecked and unchallenged — becoming a primary source for local news.

With the dominance of the tech giants, local publishers' transition to a digital-first business model is constantly challenged. News content is worth an estimated £1 billion to Google and Facebook, yet publishers do not receive fair remuneration. Legislation to level the playing field is coming, but the process needs to be sped up. The Digital Markets Unit exists in shadow form but does not have the statutory powers it needs.

Last year, government spent only 2 per cent of its advertising budget in local media, compared with 17 per cent with Google and Facebook. Diverting more of its advertising spend into local media would help it to connect with communities.

Expanding the business rates relief scheme, extending tax reliefs for creative industries to local publishers and introducing a tax credit system for advertisers are targeted, short-term interventions government can implement.

The BBC's plans to expand its online local news services, moving into a space well served by commercial providers, threaten local publishers and put at risk the diversity of choice that consumers enjoy. Yet despite the challenges, our industry is innovating. One example is the launch of the Public Notice Portal, which will extend the reach of public notices through local media's online platforms.

Local news brands are part of our communities and an essential pillar of democracy. Let us act now to ensure a prosperous future for local journalism.

Danny Cammiade is chief executive of Tindle Newspapers Group and vice-chairman of the News Media Association

Martin Samuel Notebook

Give council vandals the chop, not our historic trees

Who are these people who sit in offices and give orders to chop down trees? You would think they'd be outliers in their communities, but no. They're everywhere. Plymouth, where 129 horse chestnuts and hawthorns were removed in the dead of night for a regeneration project. Sheffield, where a street improvement scheme meant the sacrifice of 17,500 healthy specimens. London, with 50 centuries-old plane trees making way for Euston's new ticket office. Wellingborough, and 40 lime trees due to be felled, to create access to a dual carriageway.

The axeman came for Plymouth's trees at midnight. That's the clue. Anything the council has to get up to under the cover of darkness is never good news. And have you seen Armada Way, where the dreadful cull happened? The trees were the only good thing on it. They should have demolished every building in the vicinity and left the chestnuts in peace.

The council says new ornamental trees will be planted. So glorified twigs, really. Those spindly little sticks that take for ever to grow and add little to the landscape. No character, no grandeur, no sense of place or history. Every-high-street trees. And someone in an office gave the green light to this. Couldn't they get a proper job?

Plumb guest

Like plumbing. A recently published book, *Pipe Dreams: Secret Diaries of a Neighbourhood Plumber*, tells the story of a marketing man who gave up his career at the age of 30 to retrain fixing blocked sinks and drains. It hardly sounds a riveting read but who cares, you'd be delighted to see him anyway. Everyone's happy to see plumbers. You're freezing cold, you're knee deep in water, but the plumber's got the tools to fix it. Plumbers are a delight. The perfect dinner party? A good plumber, a good electrician and a good builder who doesn't mind taking on small but essential jobs. Because then you've got their numbers. And yes, it'd be nice to spend the evening with Gandhi or Jesus Christ — and he was a decent carpenter, after all — but let's face it, if the boiler's packed up, prayer isn't going to solve it. You've probably tried prayer anyway. Turns out you still need a plumber.



Maybe add a place at the table for a decent mechanic. After all, stranded on the side of a motorway, who doesn't want to see the AA man? They're almost as enrapturing as plumbers. Boris Johnson could work for the AA and be almost as popular as he imagines.

Thrilled to bits

War correspondent. Now that's a hellish job. Benjamin Hall from Fox News returned to Ukraine to cover one last conflict and was blown up. Lost an eye, a leg, may lose a foot and his left hand doesn't function. He was nearly a triple amputee. And he can't wait to get back to work. It's addictive, war reporting. Terrifyingly so.

Ed Gorman, whom I met when he covered motorsport and sailing for this newspaper, spent years doing it and was finally diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder. I recall him telling me of an epiphany on seeing a colleague return to the front line despite having suffered serious, disfiguring injuries. The awful recognition of that need for an adrenaline fix hastened his departure.

War of the words

Fortunately no lives were lost, or even damaged, in the Gary Lineker wars, which lasted considerably longer than some actual ones this country has fought (the Anglo-Zanzibar War of 1896, for instance, was over in 38 minutes). The BBC director-general, Tim Davie, became collateral damage, while the quislings were those journalists asking what right a millionaire, out-of-touch member of the luvvie elite had to pontificate on government policy. Actually, it's the same right they had to call him a millionaire, out-of-touch member of the luvvie elite. It's freedom of speech. And if you can't understand that, maybe journalism's not for you. But, no fear; the world will always need plumbers.



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Don't be fooled, SVB collapse is just the start

This crisis may not be as bad as 2007-08 but Biden's bank bailout shows what a risk to the global system it already poses

Gerard Baker



@GERARDTBAKER

To death and taxes, Benjamin Franklin should surely have added financial crises. No matter how many times we say never again, no matter the shiny new regulatory regime we build each time, or the vast economic literature spawned on the lessons learnt. There will always be another one.

In the past 50 years, financial eruptions have spilled across the landscape with impressive regularity: the secondary banking crisis in the 1970s; the Latin American debt crisis in the 1980s; the Asian financial crisis and the Russian default crisis in the 1990s; the global financial crisis in the 2000s. We then skipped a decade but didn't have to wait long in the 2020s.

We won't know for a while where this latest mess ranks in the never-ending roll. But the collapse of Silicon Valley Bank (SVB) and the disposal of two smaller US banks last weekend reminds me in one way of the calamity of 2007-08. That one initially featured a series of apparently isolated incidents, which the regulators patched up and then assured us everything was fine: the failure of a couple of small hedge funds in summer 2007; the run on Northern Rock that autumn; Bear Stearns' collapse in March 2008. Every time we were assured the "fundamentals are sound". But every time it was just another finger in the dyke. In September 2008, when Lehman Brothers ran out of time and money, the government ran out of fingers.

I'm not suggesting a replay is happening. There are big differences between now and then; most importantly, half the US banking system isn't today effectively insolvent with toxic assets. But it is a warning that these things are rarely over when the government wants us to believe

> This was a bank the US had declared was not Too Big To Fail

they are. On Monday we were assured the steps the US authorities took would calm things. By Wednesday Credit Suisse was imploding.

Why do these things keep happening? Two main answers present themselves: moral hazard and the "last war" problem.

SVB was a near textbook case of moral hazard. This was a bank the US had implicitly declared to be not "systemically important" — that it was not Too Big To Fail. Which implies it Will Be Allowed To Fail if it got into trouble.

This has two practical considerations. First, the government is signalling that if you mess up, you're on your own. The upside for the bank is that it can take big risks without the nuisance of pesky regulators coming in and poring over the books every quarter. Just woe betide it if those risks go sour.

Sure enough SVB did some risky things, most notably piling depositors' money into a couple of classes of unhedged assets — even Treasury bonds can be risky, as we shall see. Its customers, presumably aware the bank was not "systemically important", also took big risks. More than 90 per cent of the bank's deposits were above the federally guaranteed limit of $250,000 per customer. These were not all just wealthy, foolish tech bros. Astonishingly, the streaming service company Roku stuck $400 million in there.

So the writing was clearly on the wall: you make risky decisions, you face the consequences. Except, it turns out, you don't! After SVB's assets went south and depositors started a run on the bank, the Biden administration and the Federal Reserve decided it was a risk to the system after all and moved in to guarantee all deposits — even those above the $250,000 limit. Some seasoned banking regulators were confounded by the decision. "I'm astonished they made a systemic risk determination," Sheila Bair, chairwoman of the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation during the global financial crisis, told me. "This is a $200 million institution in a $23 trillion banking system. The uninsured depositors were very well-heeled."

Some are suspicious about the motives. SVB is a bank that strokes all the erogenous zones of

> For years governments acted as though zero interest was eternal

progressive Democrats. Its Silicon Valley customer base is full of woke techies who contribute gazillions to Democrats and the causes they love. Its "risk management" officer in London seemed to spend most of her time promoting LGBTQIA+ causes. Would the Biden team have done the same for depositors of, say, a bank in Texas that catered mainly to fracking companies?

But the moral hazard problem is real. The risk that letting SVB go and bankrupting its depositors would lead to a run on every midsize and small bank not designated "systemically important" was not trivial.

With the crisis at SVB — and other banks — we see the last-war problem at work. Regulators are brilliant at refighting the battle they lost last time. Unfortunately the enemy has moved on. Back in 2007-08 the world was nearly brought to its knees by bad assets. This time the world is imperilled by good deposits.

At the root of all this though is a much larger failure of policy. SVB got into trouble because it held a boatload of Treasury bonds it had acquired in that strangely unreal world of zero interest and free money. When interest rates rise, bond prices fall, and as rates have shot up in the past year, the bank's portfolio of bonds plummeted in value. That's why it won't be the last.

The problem is that for years central bankers and governments acted as though the zero-interest era was eternal. Like financial crises, however, reality eventually shows up with annoying regularity. The monetary and fiscal profligacy not only bred complacency among bankers. It helped to fuel inflation — and then interest rates had to go higher and a lot of people got burnt.

Now the central bankers are impaled on the dilemma they created. Do they keep up the fight against inflation and keep pushing up interest rates? Or do they bail out the financial system with a pause or even rate cuts? Either way, this crisis isn't over.

Letters to the Editor

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letters@thetimes.co.uk or by post to
1 London Bridge Street, London SE1 9GF

'False economy' of BBC music cuts

Sir, As representatives of the UK's freelance professional choral ensembles we stand united in our utter dismay at the BBC's planned disbandment of the UK's only full-time professional chamber choir, the BBC Singers. This decision is indicative of the persistent devaluation of choral music and the nation's rich and excellent choral heritage. In Germany there are seven radio choirs, but the BBC, which rightly prides itself on being a world-leader, is proposing to axe the UK's only one. The BBC Singers has an incredible record of introducing a wide range of people, including new generations of children, to the life-enhancing benefits of choral singing. On stretched and precarious budgets it is difficult for many freelance ensembles to match the BBC's output in this area. We are immeasurably stronger together. Our internationally revered choral sector operates within a fragile and interdependent ecology, with professional singers gaining experience and employment opportunities across the different ensembles. The BBC Singers is a critical part of that, and this decision sends an incredibly bleak message to those considering entering the profession. While we recognise the financial pressures the BBC faces, this decision is a huge false economy.
Harry Bicket, artistic director, The English Concert; **Professor John Butt**, musical director, Dunedin Consort; **Andrew Carwood**, artistic director, The Cardinall's Musick; **Harry Christophers**, founder, The Sixteen; **Laurence Cummings**, music director, Academy of Ancient Music; **Steven Devine**, vice-chairman, the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment; **Suzi Digby**, founder, ORA Singers, co-founder, London Youth Choirs; **Sir John Eliot Gardiner**, artistic director, Monteverdi Choir and Orchestras; **Dame Jane Glover**, music director, Music of the Baroque (Chicago), **Jeffrey Skidmore**, artistic director, Ex Cathedra; **Sir Roger Norrington**
Plus a further 25 signatories at thetimes.co.uk/letters

Letters to the Editor must be exclusive to The Times and may be edited. Please include a full address and daytime telephone number.

Corrections and clarifications

●We wrongly said that customers of the energy firm Utilita had to pay by direct debit (News, Mar 16). In fact it is a pay-as-you-go specialist.

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Hunt's budget changes and pension reforms

Sir, John Ralfe and Baroness Altmann (letters, Mar 16) suggest some pros and cons on the abolition of the pension lifetime allowance (LTA), and it will be all too easy to characterise this as a sop to the wealthy. What the abolition also does, however, is to correct two significant defects with the earlier system. First, the LTA operated in a manner that was highly discriminatory between those with defined benefit pensions (mostly in the public sector or in parliament) and those with defined contribution pensions (mostly in the private sector), with the former treated more generously. Second, it was always illogical to limit both the contribution input to pensions as well as the eventual output because of the range of potential investment approaches and outcomes.
Stuart Southall
Principal, Punter Southall Governance Services

Sir, A gradual increase in the lifetime pensions allowance could discourage early retirement by NHS doctors and attract widespread support. The budget's total removal of the allowance will certainly prevent that alarming six-figure tax bill on retirement. However, a clear commitment to its reintroduction by the Labour Party will only encourage early retirement by this country's senior public servants, including NHS doctors, before the next election.
Sir Paul Curran
Chairman, Doctors' and Dentists' Pay Review Body, 2013-19

Sir, If the government thinks it important that senior NHS doctors are retained and should be discouraged from retiring early, the solution is to raise the age at which doctors (and all other public sector workers) can take their pension. Unlike the chancellor's plan, this would not result in a loss to the public purse. It would also prevent the practice of retiring at, say, 55, taking a pension from the public purse and after whatever is the appropriate period returning to the same or much the same position on a similar salary.
Philip Dimond
Otham, Kent

Sir, The chancellor was right to free up the levels of annual pension fund contributions that can be made free of tax, and was also right to compensate for this by introducing a cap on the size of the tax-free lump sum that a person can claim upon retirement. Where he was wrong, though, was in his failure to amend legislation so that money inherited from a deceased person's pension fund will no longer be exempt from inheritance tax.
Michael Sobey
Banff, Aberdeenshire

Sir, This has been a good week for the chancellor. He moved with commendable speed to shore up confidence after the collapse of Silicon Valley Bank and followed this with a budget that concentrates on stability and investment, including a range of measures to help and encourage more people into work.

In November 1996, the last time a Conservative government was well behind in the polls, Ken Clarke (as chancellor) resisted the temptation to inflate the economy with tax cuts in an attempt to win votes. Instead his budget concentrated on maintaining financial stability and controlled public expenditure. The incoming chancellor in 1997, Gordon Brown, then adopted Clarke's spending plans. Between them they set the path for an extended period of steady low inflationary growth. History may be about to repeat itself.
Mike Warburton
Former head of tax at Grant Thornton; Newent, Glos

Sir, Like many chancellors before him, Jeremy Hunt does not seem to grasp that a number of small fiscal measures would aid the economy a great deal more than trying to change the present work culture. The struggling hospitality sector, which contributes about £60 billion a year to the economy, has pleaded for a reduction in VAT, to no avail. Yet the benefit would be immediate, unlike any futile efforts to get British people of any age or gender to work in this vital industry.
Ruth Watson
Watson and Walpole restaurant, Framlingham, Suffolk

Sir, It is all very well trying to get older people back into work but not all employers want them. When I was under 35 I was shortlisted for every job I wanted. But when I was made redundant at 58, it took me two years, 200 applications and 50 interviews to get a new job — even though by then I was vastly more experienced than I had been before I was 35. Many employers prefer youth to experience, and there probably isn't much the chancellor can do about that.
Valerie Moyses
Bloxham, Oxon

Sir, Is parenthood now redundant ("More free childcare to get parents back in jobs", Mar 15)?
Jane Childs
Tisbury, Wilts

Medical matters

Sir, Giles Craven (letter, Mar 16), says that the amount of unremunerated hours worked by junior doctors would not be tolerated by other professions. In my 40 years of teaching in the UK I was not remunerated for at least half the hours that I worked.
Aubrey Smith
Saltspring Island, Canada

Sir, Your leading article ("Do No Harm", Mar 15) states that medical students are left with £100,000 debts. The true cost of their training is more like £300,000, so they should have no grounds for complaint on that score. It seems unfair that, having qualified, young doctors are free to leave the UK with no penalty.
W Anthony Pike
Cambourne, Cambs

Sir, Caroline Abrahams is concerned about chronic staff shortages in the NHS (letters, Mar 13 & 14). When I was appointed in 1988 we comprised five consultants doing all the general surgery and urology; there are now 18 such consultants. At the same time the hospital had four orthopaedic consultants; now they number 14.

The problem with NHS care may not be a simple question of numbers.
Alan Cameron
Ret'd consultant surgeon, Ipswich

Town v country

Sir, It is not surprising that James Marriott is a "townie" ("Britons are townies and should be proud of it", Mar 16). Young people like to flock together so they can socialise and find a mate. But many older people, having found their life partner, don't want to live cheek by jowl. They want space around them, fresh air, unclogged roads, peace and quiet and enjoyment of the natural world, and they resent their green landscape being concreted over. It should not be assumed that we are all "urban people".
Anna Webster
Poulton-le-Fylde, Lancs

'STUPID' FEES A SETBACK TO EDUCATION

FROM THE TIMES MARCH 17, 1923

To the Editor of The Times
Sir, The proposal of the Government, as I understand it, is to impose a payment for entrance into the Natural History Museum of 6d on several days of the week, leaving two or three "free days", of which one shall be Sunday. If this fee is designed to contribute any appreciable sum to the cost of upkeep of the Museum it should be levied on those days on which the majority of the visitors will attend, Saturday and Sunday. From a reliable source I am informed that when the cost of installing turnstiles and door-keepers is taken into account, so far from contributing anything to the Exchequer the imposition of this charge will actually result in a loss; the overwhelming majority of the visitors will choose the "free days" for their visits. But whilst the failure of this proposal as a source of revenue will be absolute, its success as a stupid reactionary measure in damaging the cause of science and education will be considerable. The Museum is not merely — as evidently the Government view it — a place of entertainment; it is one of the great educational institutions of London. As a repository of the standard types of animals, both living and extinct, the Museum is without an equal in the world. Under the able presidency of the director, Sir Sidney Harmer, research is being vigorously prosecuted, and the keepers rank as first class authorities in biological science. As the incumbent of the Huxley Chair in the Imperial College, my proximity to the Museum and the constant intercourse which I am thus enabled to enjoy with the keepers and assistant keepers is one of the principal privileges of my position. At present a few art students, for whose benefit the Museum was not designed, enjoy special consideration; but the budding schoolboy naturalist, whose love of Nature is first stimulated by casual visits to the Museum, the scientific visitor who desires to consult the keepers, the naturalist from the country who visits London to refresh his knowledge — these will be the victims of a charge which will discourage the frequency of their visits, but will not raise money enough to pay for the turnstiles.
Faithfully yours, E W MACBRIDE,
Imperial College of Science and Technology, South Kensington.

THETIMES.CO.UK/ARCHIVE

Illogical trophy bill

Sir, Apropos the letter (Mar 15) from celebrities supporting a bill that would ban trophy hunting imports, MPs committed to saving endangered animals will surely be more interested in the informed views of conservation scientists, African communities (letter, Mar 16) and their governments. As they have said, the likely consequence of a ban would be the slaughter of countless animals as wildlife habitat and funds for anti-poaching were lost. As scientists who have spent decades in Africa we have seen what snares and poison do to elephants and lions, and it is far worse than trophy hunting. It is time for virtue signalling to be shown the red card.
Professor Adam Hart, University of Gloucestershire; **Professor Amy Dickman**, University of Oxford; **Dr Dilys Roe**, International Union for the Conservation of Nature

US drone 'collision'

Sir, The Russians may be technically right when they deny any physical contact with the US drone ("US vows to keep flying drones after clash with Russia", Mar 15). The wake turbulence behind and below a fast, heavy and manoeuvring aircraft would be enough to upset a lighter aircraft, especially one with a high aspect ratio wing such as used on the Reaper. I can vouch for the effect, having been caught in the wake turbulence of a Vulcan bomber while flying my 18-metre glider above a mountain ridge in Scotland. I rapidly ran out of aileron control and was lucky to fly clear of the turbulence before becoming inverted.
Derek Dye
Penarth, Vale of Glamorgan

Out of stock

Sir, Further to your report "John Lewis looks to chief executive for turnaround" (Mar 16), we visited the John Lewis store in Milton Keynes yesterday and were staggered by the poor stock levels in the bedding department. We were invited to order online but items are often out of stock online too: it's almost as if John Lewis does not want us in its shops. The John Lewis Partnership has long been our "go to" shop, but it needs to manage its stocks better or we will all be heading to Dunelm.
Joan Keevill
Brackley, Northants

Bullfinch decree

Sir, Henry VIII's act of parliament "promising a penny for every dead bullfinch" for eating fruit buds (Nature notes, Mar 16) was to include many other species. Hedgehogs, wrongly believed to suck milk from the teats of recumbent cows at night, attracted a twopence bounty: shockingly, parish records show half a million were paid in one period before abolition of the act in the 18th century.
Peter Saunders
Salisbury

Present and correct

Sir, Robert Pawson (letter, Mar 16) mentions the standing ovation that Irish fans gave the England team in 1973. Equally worthy of mention is the prolonged standing ovation given to the England captain, John Pullin, for his brilliant and succinct speech at the post-match banquet: "We may not be very good, but at least we turn up."
Simon Roxborough
St Helens, Merseyside

Daily Universal Register

UK: Liberal Democrats Spring Conference in York; Cambridge Science Festival begins; Cheltenham Gold Cup; St Patrick's Day celebrations; Comic Relief Red Nose Day.

Nature notes



A squally shower blew through the field maple. The tree seemed to shiver. Then the sun came out, and a posse of blue tits arrived. Swinging acrobatically on the slender twigs of the outer branches, the birds were searching for hiding caterpillars. Not long later, a tree creeper materialised at the base of the trunk and began its methodical ascent. Claws gripping, tail pressed against the bark, it too was foraging. Field maples are not big trees and are often overlooked by humans, but they are much in demand by birds: no sooner had the tree creeper departed than a flock of roving goldfinches alighted in the crown. JONATHAN TULLOCH

Birthdays today



Dame Penelope Lively, *pictured*, writer, *Moon Tiger* (1987, Booker Prize), 90; **Jeff Banks**, fashion designer, 80; **Pattie Boyd**, model and photographer, 79; **John Boyega**, actor, the Star Wars film series, 31; **Rt Rev Sarah Bullock**, Bishop of Shrewsbury, 59; **Caroline Corr**, singer and drummer, the Corrs, 50; **Lesley-Anne Down**, actress, *Upstairs, Downstairs* (1973-75), 69; **Patrick Duffy**, actor, *Dallas* (1978-85, 1986-91, 2012-14), 74; **Myrlie Evers-Williams**, US civil rights activist, 90; **Prof Michael Finnissy**, composer and pianist, 77; **Lord (John) Gardiner of Kimble**, senior deputy speaker of the House of Lords, 67; **William Gibson**, novelist, *Neuromancer* (1984), 75; **Dame Clare Grey**, professor of chemistry, University of Cambridge, 58; **Clare Grogan**, singer, Altered Images, and actress, *Gregory's Girl* (1981), 61; **Carrie Johnson**, Conservative Party director of communications (2017-18), wife of the former prime minister Boris Johnson, 35; **Sir Robin Knox-Johnston**, yachtsman, first person to sail solo nonstop around the world, 84; **Ruth Langsford**, TV presenter, *This Morning* (2002-21), 63; **Rob Lowe**, actor, *St Elmo's Fire* (1985), *The West Wing* (1999-2003), 59; **Sandy Luk**, chief executive, Marine Conservation Society, 54; **Rear-Admiral Jim Macleod**, chairman, Forces in Mind Trust, assistant chief of defence staff and defence services secretary (2019-22), 53; **Lord (Jim) O'Neill of Gatley**, commercial secretary to the Treasury (2015-16), chief economist, Goldman Sachs (2001-10), 66; **Sir Lindsay Owen-Jones**, chairman and chief executive, L'Oréal (1988-2006; non-executive chairman 2006-11), 77; **Lord (Stuart) Rose of Monewden**, chairman, Asda and Ocado (2013-21), 74; **Kurt Russell**, actor, *Escape From New York* (1981), 72; **Sir Patrick Sergeant**, founder of Euromoney Publications, 99; **Sir Patrick Vallance**, chief scientific adviser to government, head, Government Science and Engineering Profession and national technology adviser, 63; **Lord (Robert) Walker of Gestingthorpe**, justice of the Supreme Court (2009-13), 85.

On this day

In **461** Patrick, the patron saint of Ireland, died, according to legend. He is regarded as the founder of Christianity in Ireland.

The last word

"Courage is rightly esteemed the first of human qualities, because, as has been said, 'it is the quality which guarantees all others'." Winston Churchill, *Great Contemporaries* (1937)

Quantitative Destruction

Credit Suisse is a victim of the extreme skittishness of markets as the consequences of a decade of ultra-easy money unwind. This process may have a long way to run

Global financial markets bounced back yesterday after the Swiss National Bank announced that it would provide a £45 billion lending facility to Credit Suisse. But investors and indeed anxious businesses and households in Britain (and the rest of the world) are entitled to wonder: for how long?

The previous day, shares in Switzerland's second-largest bank had tumbled by 30 per cent, bringing its total decline since 2018 to close to 90 per cent, while the cost of insuring its bonds against default soared to the kind of levels associated with the global financial crisis of 2008. Yet this was no Silicon Valley Bank, which had been the 14th-largest American lender until it collapsed last week. Credit Suisse is among the biggest banks in the world, one of 30 classified as a G-SIFI (global systemically important financial institution). Its failure would be an economic cataclysm.

What is most troubling is that anyone is talking about Credit Suisse in those terms. True, the bank has been poorly run for years. It has been implicated in a series of recent scandals, including Greensill, Wirecard and Archegos. It has also got through a succession of chief executives, forced to resign after scandals surrounding the bank. But unlike SVB, it did not make outsize bets on long-dated government bonds using uninsured deposits, thereby blowing a hole in its balance sheet as the value of those bonds fell when interest rates rose. Instead, Credit Suisse has healthy capital ratios, abundant liquidity now buttressed by central bank loans, and limited exposure to rising rates.

Nonetheless, Credit Suisse is a victim of the extreme skittishness of financial markets, particularly since the SVB collapse, which has left any troubled institution vulnerable to a loss of investor or depositor confidence. That skittishness is a response to what Ian Harnett and David Bowers of Absolute Strategy Research have dubbed the "quantitative destruction" now unfolding in the financial system as institutions and structures that proliferated during the era of ultra-low interest rates start to unwind. Britain got an early taste of this when a sharp rise in government bond yields in the wake of Kwasi Kwarteng's mini-budget nearly blew up the pension system.

This process may have a long way to run. Larry Fink, chief executive of BlackRock, has warned of a "slowing rolling crisis" in the US financial system with "more seizures and shutdowns coming". That sounds right. Trillions of dollars have already been wiped off the value of global stock and bond markets, not to mention cryptocurrencies. The real problems arise when investors are forced to sell assets to repay debts, thereby crystallising losses and raising the spectre of bankruptcies and death spirals. Swift action by central banks, as has been on display this week, may be enough to forestall such forced selling. That can buy time for orderly restructurings, such as yesterday's rescue of First Republic, another US lender, by 11 large American banks. But with so much debt fixed at ultra-low rates with long maturities during the era of easy money, it could take years for all the risks buried in obscure corners of the system to emerge.

That poses real dilemmas for central banks. With inflation so far above target, they have had no choice but to raise interest rates sharply. Yet because so much debt is fixed, those rate hikes are proving less effective than hoped in cooling the economy. That is putting pressure on them to push rates even higher, increasing the risk that quantitative destruction spreads to the core of the banking system via falling property prices and the mortgage market. Nonetheless, the European Central Bank decided to forge ahead with a further interest rate rise yesterday; the Bank of England and Federal Reserve face their own decisions next week. They will be acutely aware that any suggestion they are giving up on the fight against inflation will trigger its own turmoil.

Age of Reason

Emmanuel Macron is showing courage in forcing through necessary pension reform

Imagine for one blissful moment that Britain's public finances are in rude health and the government of the day uses this freedom to lower the state retirement age to 64. Cue dancing in the streets and a landslide at the next election.

Across the Channel that retirement age is the subject of protests, strikes and political upheaval. The state pension age in France is 62 and polls suggest that is just the way the country likes it.

So Emmanuel Macron is displaying considerable political courage in pushing through a new law raising the pensionable age to 64. After trying and failing to secure the support of parliament yesterday, the French president backed out of a vote and resorted to presidential decree. This is a bold (some might say foolhardy) move given his political isolation over this incendiary issue. But it is a nettle that must be grasped. France can no longer afford its luxurious retirement arrangements. If nothing is done the state pension system could be €790 billion in deficit by 2050. Longer lives mean a liberal regime that has endured since the days of François Mitterrand is unsustainable.

Yet, despite years of explanation and negotiation, Mr Macron has been unable to persuade his countrymen of the necessity of reform. Scenting blood, parties on the left and right have combined with trade unions to block the measure, with protests and strikes erupting across the country in recent weeks. Piles of rotting rubbish in the streets of Paris testify to the anger of France's refuse workers, who can currently retire at 57. To British eyes this militancy is even more remarkable given that the wider change to 64 is not due until 2030.

In France, which enjoys the lowest retirement age in the European Union, work-life balance means just that. A comfortable retirement is regarded by most as part of the state's pact with the people. A tax take above 45 per cent of GDP, much higher than in Britain, is expected to fund a good welfare system. Nonetheless, Mr Macron is justified in seeing the reform as essential, and not only to save the pension system. Like Britain, France needs its older workforce to keep contributing. Just 56 per cent of those aged 55 to 64 are in a job, while the figure in Germany is 72 per cent.

Like Rishi Sunak, Mr Macron is prepared to take tough decisions when he believes it is in the national interest. Given the scale of opposition, he was taking a big gamble in bringing the bill to France's lower house, where his Renaissance party and its allies are in a minority following elections last year. But having blinked in parliament and fallen back on using an executive order, he is left in a weak position. He faces accusations of dodging democracy. Strikes and protests may be given fresh impetus by his exercise in rule by diktat. His government could face a no-confidence vote and his prime minister, Élisabeth Borne, who engaged in frantic negotiations to get parliamentary support, may have to fall on her sword. He could spend the remaining four years of his second term as a lame duck in the domestic sphere.

Yesterday, thousands of demonstrators gathered in the Place de la Concorde. Meanwhile, the right-wing politician Marine Le Pen was capitalising on the president's discomfort, promising a no-confidence vote. But Mr Macron must persevere. France can sometimes be seen as unreformable. The bill has been variously decried as "inhuman" and "brutal". It is nothing of the kind. As times change, even France must change with them.

Cautionary Tale

A new film documenting the rise and fall of BlackBerry is instructive

It is a sure sign of the pace of technological change when a device that barely a decade ago commanded over half of the US smartphone market is now the subject of a period piece about the nature of corporate failure. *BlackBerry*, currently attracting rave reviews at film festivals prior to its release later in the spring, is already releasing a wave of nostalgia for the brand's handsets. Yet no one aged under 20 will remember when this utterly defunct product was a world-beating design classic.

In 2009 newly elected President Obama, told by the secret service that he would have to surrender the phone permanently holstered to his belt, famously refused — such was his addiction to what became known as the CrackBerry. Hillary Clinton's insistence on using a personal email account even after becoming secretary of state owed much to her BlackBerry habit. At the height of their market dominance in 2009, BlackBerrys were equally beloved by middle-aged executives, politicians and bankers, who liked their security, and teenage schoolchildren, who liked BBM, the instant messaging service.

Some commentators blamed the spread of urban riots in the summer of 2011 on youngsters' use of BBM, such was the brand's ubiquity. Given the charge sheet currently levelled at many social media platforms, that accusation now seems rather quaint. Just four years later, BlackBerry's market share was down to 0.3 per cent. Scornful of touchscreens and underestimating consumers' demand for limitless apps, BlackBerry thought its core corporate customers would stay loyal. Yet as iPhones and Android devices proliferated, the mass market swallowed the specialist market.

As competitors innovated, BlackBerry thought it could consolidate. In another age, that would have resulted in a gradual decline. In the current age, a failure to adapt leads to pretty instant death.

World

Fury as MPs denied a vote on Macron's pension plan

France
Adam Sage Paris

President Macron performed a humiliating climbdown yesterday as his government bypassed parliament to implement his pension reform without a vote.

In a move that infuriated the opposition and led to scenes of chaos in the National Assembly, Élisabeth Borne, the prime minister, said that an executive order would raise the retirement age for a state pension from 62 to 64.

The measure denies MPs a say on legislation touted as the centrepiece of Macron's second term. Opposition parties can block the bill only by toppling the government with a vote likely to be



Thousands protesting in the Place de la Concorde were dispersed by police

held next week. The move adds to political tension over a reform that has provoked weeks of strikes and protests, disrupting public transport across France and leaving rubbish to pile up on the streets of Paris.

Macron, who lost his parliamentary majority in elections last spring, had hoped to persuade the opposition centre-right Republicans to vote for his reform. His ministers had repeatedly said that he had no intention of using a tactic denounced by critics as a denial of democracy. Unable to convince Republicans, however, and faced with the prospect of a defeat in the assembly, Macron ordered a last-minute reversal.

The decision provoked protests across France, many of which descended into violence. Police fought running battles with demonstrators in Paris after dispersing a gathering of about 6,000 people in the Place de la Concorde. More than 120 people were arrested in the capital, where one group tried to approach the Élysée before being driven back by police officers. Amid clouds of tear gas and smoke from the piles of rubbish set on fire by the protesters, tourists fled for their hotels whilst left-wing activists called for an uprising. There were similar scenes of chaos in Lyons, where the town hall was stoned and its windows broken, in Marseilles, where shops were ransacked, and in Rennes and Nantes.

The government says that the state pension system will run up a deficit of between €665 billion and €903 billion — more than a third of present GDP — by 2050 unless the French agree to work longer. Ministers initially said their reform would save €17.7 billion by 2030, although they have since announced measures to distribute €7 billion to people on small pensions.

Opposition MPs sang *La Marseillaise* as Borne stepped up to announce the executive order in parliament. They then walked out of the chamber.

Marine Le Pen, 54, the populist right-wing National Rally candidate in last year's presidential elections, called for Borne's resignation and described the use of an executive order as a "personal failure" for Macron.

Mathilde Panot, 34, head of the populist left-wing France Unbowed parliamentary group, said: "This is the first day of the end of Emmanuel Macron's term of office. He has neither parliamentary nor popular legitimacy and this is a supreme avowal of weakness that is plunging the country into a political crisis."

France Info, the state radio, said that Borne, the second woman to hold the prime minister's post in France, was in an "extremely fragile" position. Macron had given her the job of negotiating a parliamentary majority with opposition parties and she had failed, commentators said.

There is speculation that her days are numbered, whatever the outcome of a confidence vote next week. In the French system, prime ministers are expected to fall on their swords when in difficulty to spare the president from such a fate.

Unions meeting last night were expected to call for more of the strikes and protests that began on January 19. They had lost some of their momentum over the past week.

In Paris, the police have indicated that they may requisition striking refuse collectors to remove some of the more than 6,000 tonnes of rubbish in the city.

Opposition parties are likely to call confidence motions early next week. Commentators said they were unlikely to unite around a single motion, however, given the gulf that separates the radical left from the populist right and both from the Republicans.

Macron is showing courage, leading article, page 27



Moment Russians clipped US drone

1 US air force MQ-9 Reaper drone patrols the skies over international waters near Crimea on Tuesday

2 Russian Su-27 fighter jet spotted approaching the Reaper, monitored by camera fitted under drone

Poland becomes first Nato nation to give Kyiv jets

Poland pledged yesterday to send fighter jets to Ukraine within days, becoming the first Nato member state to do so (Marc Bennetts writes).

President Duda said his country would send four Soviet-era MiG-29s "within the next few days," and more as soon as they had been serviced.

"A decision has been taken at the highest levels. We can say confidently that we are sending MiGs to Ukraine," Duda said.

Warsaw inherited MiG-29s from East Germany and Ukrainian pilots are trained to fly

Discovery about Earth's toxic twin

United States
Jacqui Goddard

Known as Earth's "toxic twin", it is the solar system's most hellish planet — with temperatures so extreme they could melt lead, crushing surface pressure and a thick layer of acid clouds that smell like rotten eggs.

And just when it seemed that Venus could not be any more infernal, scientists have now discovered the first direct evidence of volcanic activity there too, hidden among a trove of radar images taken in the 1990s.

"I looked again and I thought 'Wow, I really think there's something there'," said Robert Herrick, a research professor at the University of Alaska Fairbanks, who spotted the clues after trawling the 30-year-old data for more than 200 hours. "It was exciting. This is the holy grail of proving that Venus is volcanically active," he said.

Venus, a rocky planet similar in size and density to Earth, transformed from a once-temperate ocean world to an acidic hothouse during some part of the last 1.5 billion years.

Understanding how it evolved from what was possibly a once habitable water-world to a planet with an intense greenhouse effect and a toxic atmospheric chemistry — and the role of volcanic activity within it — is important to forming a better understanding of our own planet's history and future.

Venus was the first planet to be explored by a spacecraft — Nasa's Mariner 2 mission, which conducted a flyby in 1962. Since then, multiple missions have mapped its rocky crust, analysed its interior, explored its atmosphere and even landed on the surface — albeit briefly, before the spacecraft succumbed to the crushing forces and scorching heat. From 1990 to 1992, Nasa's Magellan probe used radar

The colourful life of Monet's wealthy brother
Page 31



Film is Canada's answer to The Social Network
Page 32

US AIR FORCE /REUTERS; ERIK SIMONSEN/GETTY IMAGES



the aircraft. Western countries, including the US, have been wary about supplying warplanes to Ukraine over fears that it would be seen by Moscow as a serious escalation.

The Polish offer came as video was released of a Russian fighter jet clipping and in effect bringing down a US military surveillance drone in the first direct clash between the nuclear superpowers since the start of the war.

The Russian Su-27 fighter jet dumped fuel on the American MQ-9 Reaper drone in an apparent attempt to damage it as it flew above the Black Sea, according to video released by the Pentagon yesterday. The US said the fighter jet's manoeuvres resulted in a collision with the drone, damaging a propeller and making it inoperable. The MQ-9's video feed cut out for about a minute, it said.

The drone plummeted into waters up to 5,000ft deep, making it hard to recover, Mark Milley, chairman of the US joint chiefs of staff, said. Russia has said it will attempt to retrieve the MQ-9 for intelligence purposes.

Moscow has denied that its jet clipped the drone's propellers and Russian state television insisted yesterday that the video proved it had not sustained damage. "[The propeller] continues to rotate calmly," a Channel One presenter said. "Our pilots brilliantly performed manoeuvres at ultra-short distances."

The US has said that although there is no doubt Russia was "aggressive", it was unclear if the fighter jet had intended to bring down the drone. "Clearly we do not seek armed conflict with Russia," Milley said.

Lloyd Austin, the US defence secretary, and Sergei Shoigu, his Russian counterpart, had their first phone conversation since October to discuss the incident, which took place close to Crimea. "We take any potential for escalation very seriously. And that's why I believe it's important to keep the lines of communication open," Austin said.

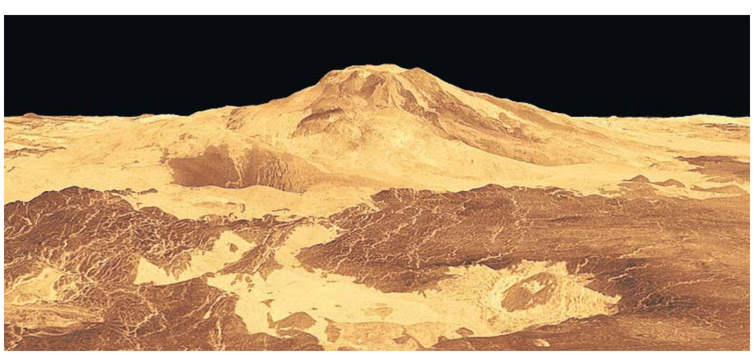
● Donald Trump made a pitch for anti-war voters in next year's presidential election, demanding an overhaul of Nato in his latest campaign video.

The former president called for a "total cessation of hostilities" in what he called "this proxy battle in Ukraine", or "we risk global war".

He has previously said he could end the Ukraine war in less than a day, telling Fox News Russia should be allowed to "take over something" as the price of peace.

Earlier this week Ron DeSantis, the Florida governor expected to run for the White House, described the war as a "territorial dispute" that was not in America's "vital national interest".

triggers eruptions of excitement



One of the images of the surface of Venus taken by Nasa's Magellan probe

to image the planet's surface. Each of the images was loaded onto compact discs, which allowed scientists to view them only one at a time. Decades later, with computing power enhanced and the hundreds of discs' worth of data now databased, Herrick started a meticulous search through the Magellan images.

The findings add more urgency to Veritas — Nasa's upcoming robotic mission to Venus, on which Herrick is a member of the science team. The orbiter will study Earth's sister planet from crust to core to shed light on the secrets of its lost habitable world.

Shoddy kit and neo-Nazis cripple German army

Germany
Oliver Moody Berlin

Germany's military communications are so poor that soldiers in armoured vehicles are forced to open the hatches or clamber out and shout rather than use the radio, according to a damning report on dysfunctionality in its armed forces.

The report identified kit shortages, shoddy infrastructure and stifling red tape, as well as troubling incidents of political extremism and bullying.

Sixty-six accidents were caused by a standard-issue parachute that could not be steered at high speed or when the wind changed. It took ten years to submit an order for a model of helmet for helicopter pilots that had been used by the US since the 1990s; seven years to supply the media team with modern cameras; and five years to discipline an NCO who used the greeting *Sieg Heil*, the report found.

The Bundeswehr, Germany's armed forces, are no strangers to disorder, having chafed for many years against underinvestment and bureaucratic constraints. Olaf Scholz, the chancellor, has promised to spend €100 billion on creating a "capable and ultra-modern" force that he said would be the most powerful conventional military in Europe.

Although most estimates suggest that the Bundeswehr needs at least €20 billion worth of ammunition to meet its core Nato commitments, only €1.1 billion has been set aside for this purpose this year. Eva Högl, the parliamentary armed forces commissioner, said it would take a minimum of €300 billion to modernise the Bundeswehr properly and the process would last half a century at the present rate of progress.

Högl's annual report also revealed a long list of everyday failures that were grinding down morale and combat-readiness in the ranks, including malfunctioning lavatories.

The former MP spent 100 days travelling to 70 German military sites around the world, interviewing 2,343 personnel. Many complaints involved basic equipment that was delayed, defective or in short supply. Lessons at the army's tank training school were routinely cancelled because it had barely half the vehicles needed.

The military hospital in Ulm had no internet connection, meaning that sensitive medical devices had to be monitored by hand. Staff at the medical academy's microbiology institute in Munich had to use a 28-year-old dot-matrix printer and an elderly laboratory refrigerator at imminent risk of breaking down, which would have forced them to transfer samples, including biohazards, to a civilian facility.

There were widespread shortages of clothing, with some soldiers saying they had to get a doctor's note if they wanted to swap items that were uncomfortable or the wrong size. The loathed "Clothing System 90", a standard array of field uniforms introduced towards the end of the Cold War, is still in use even though troops have warned for decades that it is susceptible to cold and damp.

Troops said they often had to buy their own equipment, with paratroopers procuring head torches or helmet camouflage privately because none were provided. IT staff at a naval administration office waited months before being given computers. A medic deployed to Mali with a transport helicopter crew could not communicate with his colleagues because the Bundeswehr failed to provide him with a radio-equipped helmet, despite repeated requests.

There was also a good deal of frustration with military bureaucracy. One sergeant in HR was subjected to a routine safety check that took three years to process, during which time he was forbidden from accessing the HR computer system or visiting his workplace without constant accompaniment.

The number of new suspected cases of political extremism in the ranks fell last year, from 226 to 203. However, there were still dozens of soldiers with apparent neo-Nazi leanings. This area is attracting particular scrutiny as several serving and former members of the Bundeswehr were arrested in December in what prosecutors claim was a foiled far-right plot to topple the government and install a military dictatorship.

Soldiers were caught carving SS symbols and runes into desks, giving the Nazi salute during the national anthem or claiming that "Jews brought the plague with them".

There were also several cases of ritual humiliation and bullying. One officer leading a class on "orders and obedience" handed a female soldier a gun and told her to shoot one of her comrades. She refused, saying she could not tell if it was loaded. The officer then gave her a P8 pistol and repeated the order. When she declined a second time, he pointed the gun at the soldier himself and pulled the trigger, revealing that the gun was not loaded.

The report also showed that the Bundeswehr was falling short of its target to reach a strength of 203,000 by the end of the decade, from 183,000 today. Some 21 per cent of recruits left the service within six months of joining.

Military expenditure

For year 2021 **Expenditure** (% of GDP)

	Expenditure	% of GDP
US	$800.7bn	3.5%
China	$293.4bn	1.7%
India	$76.6bn	2.7%
UK	**$68.4bn**	**2.2%**
Russia	$65.9bn	4.1%
France	$56.6bn	2.0%
Germany	**$56bn**	**1.3%**
Saudi Arabia	$55.6bn	6.6%
Japan	$54.1bn	1.1%
South Korea	$50.2bn	2.8%

Source: SIPRI

World

Nuclear warning after 2.5 tonnes of uranium goes missing

Libya
Abbie Cheeseman

The United Nations said that 2½ tonnes of uranium had gone missing in war-torn Libya, warning that the development raised "nuclear security concerns".

Although the ten barrels of uranium ore could not immediately be used for bomb fuel, experts said that after an enrichment process each tonne could make up to 5.6kg of weapons-grade nuclear fuel — possible for groups with technological means.

Rafael Mariano Grossi, the director-general of the International Atomic Energy Agency, the UN's nuclear watchdog, informed member states of the missing uranium on Wednesday.

It is not clear when the uranium was taken as the inspection of an undisclosed site in Libya, planned for last year, was postponed until this week due to the volatile security situation.

Getting to the site, which is in a location outside of internationally recognised government control, requires "complex logistics", the watchdog said.

"The loss of knowledge about the present location of nuclear material may present a radiological risk, as well as nuclear security concerns," the confidential statement said, adding that it had gone missing from a site in which it was "previously-declared".

Some analysts have suggested it could have gone missing in Sabha, a lawless area of southern Libya. It was there that Colonel Gaddafi, the former Libyan leader, stored thousands of barrels of the "yellowcake" uranium ore as part of a secret weapons programme.

While the UN removed the enriched uranium from Libya in 2009, it left the yellowcake in Sabha behind. It is not clear how much remains to date.

The media unit of the Libyan National Army, which has powers in the Sabha district, said that they had found the ten missing barrels near the border with Chad, though it was not made clear if this was the missing uranium reported by the UN.

The news came as authorities in Thailand announced that a metal tube containing radioactive caesium-137 went missing from National Power Plant 5A in February.

It is unclear whether the item was taken deliberately or not. Warnings were issued instructing people not to touch or attempt to open the object if they come across it, citing serious health risks.

Supporters fly in to stop Khan's arrest

Pakistan
Charlie Faulkner Lahore

It's a long way from Glasgow to Lahore but Umar Ishaq, 53, was sure the journey had been worth it. After living in Scotland for 24 years, Ishaq has spent the last six months in Pakistan, defending Imran Khan.

"It's time for people to wake up and realise what's happening," the father of five told The Times outside Khan's home in Lahore, as tensions rose again over attempts to arrest the former prime minister. "We can't let this opportunity go. We won't get another leader like Imran Khan. My family understands why I'm here, but my eight-year-old daughter was scared for me when she saw on television the police firing tear gas."

Khan's lawyers are fighting a warrant for him to appear in court over a corruption case linked to his term in office and a terrorism charge. The former cricket star's supporters are determined to defy security forces and stop him being arrested at the home where he has been holed up as clashes erupted on the streets this week.

The courts have extended a pause in police efforts to arrest Khan, 70, granting him a reprieve until Thursday. Judges have also barred his supporters from holding a rally on Sunday before elections for the assembly in Punjab, where Lahore is the provincial capital.

Khan, who leads the opposition Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party, was ousted from office in April. He has been accused of illegally selling state gifts when he was prime minister and of concealing his assets, charges he denies. Yesterday a judge said his repeated refusals to appear in court meant he was in "defiance of the court process".

Attempts to detain him led to running battles between security forces and Khan's supporters on Tuesday and Wednesday. Protests also erupted across the country.

Omar Ayub Khan, the last federal minister for economic affairs under Khan, said the police approach had been heavy handed. "Their behaviour was victimisation. The current government is scared of Imran Khan because he's awakened people," he said. "The police have come across as a bunch of thugs and this has been a total embarrassment for them."

On Wednesday Khan said he was "willing to talk to anyone" for the sake of democracy. Shehbaz Sharif, the prime minister, called for unity among the political parties, but pointed out that Khan had rejected two recent attempts at talks.

Abu Huraira, 13, jumped on a bus and travelled 60 miles from his home in Gujranwala two months ago to join supporters setting up their initial camp outside Khan's home. "I was here during the attack," he said, with swimming goggles at hand and a PTI flag to cover his mouth, ready for another onslaught of tear gas. "I'm missing my family but I will stay here until the election takes place."

Rubina Shaheen, president of PTI's women's wing, said she and almost 300 other women had given first aid to supporters injured in the clashes. "We are not scared. We are fighting for a better Pakistan, for a country with a good justice system and law and order for the whole nation," she said.

Additional reporting by Talha Saeed

GETTY IMAGES



Holding pattern Suspected gang members moving to a mega-prison in El Salvador, where 62,000, 1 per cent of the population, have been arrested since a state of emergency was declared a year ago. Tattoos show loyalties and personal history

US detains Chinese exile for $1bn fraud

United States
Didi Tang Beijing
David Charter Washington

A Chinese billionaire living in exile in the United States has been arrested on charges of fraud and money laundering involving more than $1 billion.

Guo Wengui, 52, also known as Miles Kwok, an outspoken critic of the government in Beijing, has been based in New York since 2015 to evade fraud and other charges in China.

The office of the US attorney for the southern district of New York accused him of "leading a complex conspiracy to defraud thousands of his online followers out of more than $1 billion" through investment schemes.

It added that the US government had seized about $634 million from 21 bank accounts, as well as assets purchased with the proceeds of alleged fraud.

Guo was a business partner of Steve Bannon, once President Trump's chief strategist. In 2020 they formed GTV Media Group, which became known for spreading Covid conspiracy theories.

Named in court papers as Ho Wan Kwok, Guo was charged with wire fraud, securities fraud, bank fraud and money laundering. He was arrested in his Fifth Avenue apartment overlooking Central Park where, later, firefighters extinguished a blaze on the same floor. It was unclear whether the fire was related to his arrest.

Guo's lawyer entered a not guilty plea. If convicted, Guo would face a lengthy prison sentence. William Je, Guo's financier and a dual Hong Kong-UK citizen, was charged in his absence with fraud, money laundering and obstruction of justice. Neither has commented on the charges.

Once believed to be among the richest people in China, Guo purported to blow the whistle on corruption at the highest political levels, winning support from Chinese dissidents overseas. He left China in 2014 during an anti-corruption drive by President Xi.

Catch of the day in Spain? A South American narco sub

Spain
Isambard Wilkinson Madrid

The discovery of a narco submarine off the Spanish coast has confirmed to police that drug cartels are using the vessels to import cocaine into Europe.

Spanish police refloated a semi-submersible vessel that was found by fishermen on Tuesday in the estuary of the Arousa river in the northwestern region of Galicia. Its prow was spotted by crews from mussel boats who had noticed a small oil spill.

Officers believe that the vessel is likely to have had a payload similar to the one seized in the area in 2019 with its cargo intact. That one carried more than three tonnes of Colombian cocaine worth €100 million and was abandoned by its pilot and two crew members, who were later arrested and imprisoned.



The semi-submersible was found in the estuary of the Arousa river, Galicia

Police suspect that the vessel found this week started its voyage in Brazil because they discovered food, clothes and blankets from the country on board. The semisubmersible seized in 2019 also made the 4,300-mile journey from Brazil across the Atlantic.

The boat, which had the name "Poseidon" painted on its hull, is 23 metres long, a metre longer than the previous one, although it is also made of fibreglass and has a similar design.

Investigators believe that two speedboats found near by on a beach in Ribeira are connected with the sub. According to La Voz de Galicia newspaper, police suspect that the speedboats were used by drug traffickers to clear the sub's cargo or were part of a failed preliminary attempt to get the drugs to land.

The report suggested that the narco sub sailed off the Galician coast for two weeks before it could successfully offload its cargo to local smugglers.

The discovery of a second semisubmersible in Galicia coincided with the seizure by Colombian forces of three narco subs at the weekend, which sometimes make it to North America. In 2019 a submarine carrying cocaine worth more than $165 million was seized by the US Coast Guard.

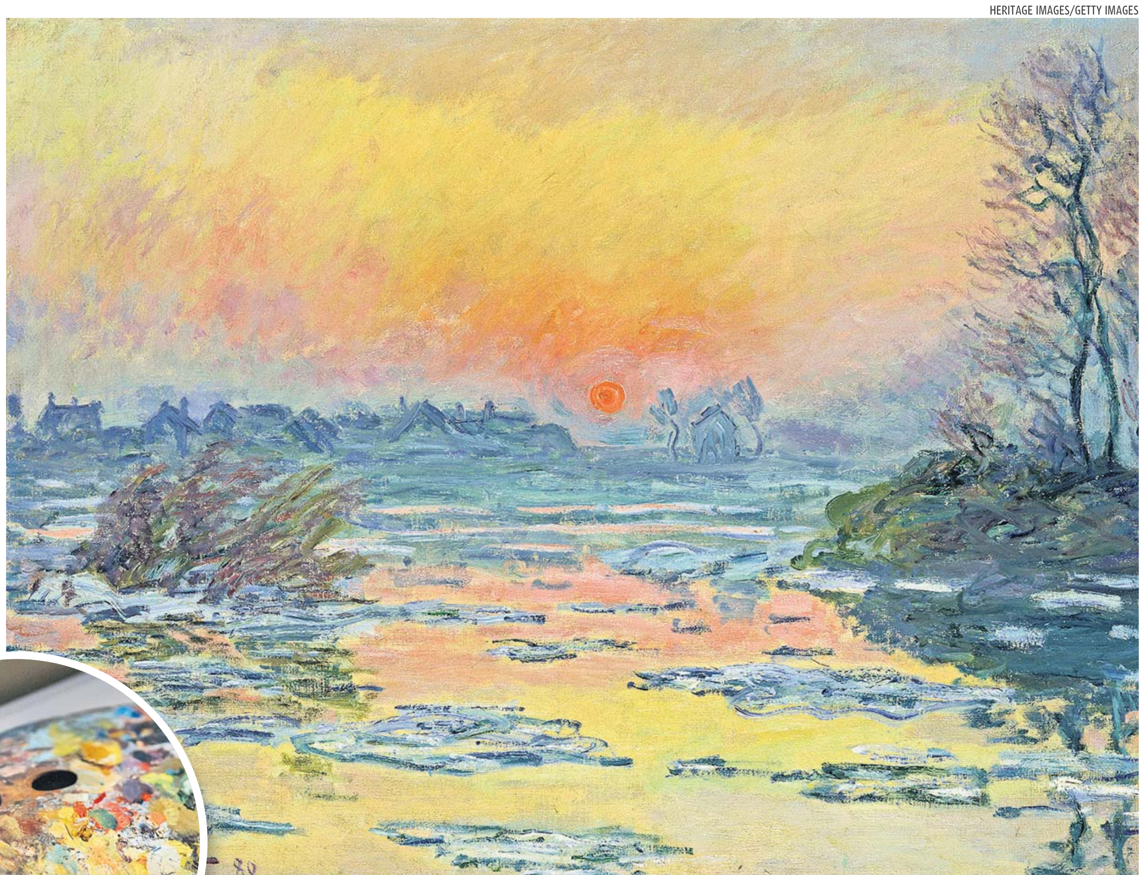
Global cocaine production has reached record levels as demand rebounds following lockdowns during the pandemic, a report has found. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime said that the cultivation of coca rose by 35 per cent between 2020 and 2021.

‘Maniacal’ brother who ensured Monet made a big impression

France

Adam Sage Paris

HERITAGE IMAGES/GETTY IMAGES





Sunset on the Seine was bought by Léon Monet, below. The exhibition includes a palette of Claude’s

In 1875 Claude Monet was among the impressionists whose works were sold at Drouot auction house in Paris.

Although interest was limited, one bidder was particularly enthusiastic. He bought at least five works, including Monet’s *Coucher de soleil sur la Seine* (Sunset on the Seine) for 255 francs, helping to drive up prices and turn the sale into a success.

The bidder was his elder brother Léon, an industrialist whose role in the movement has been largely overlooked.

This week the Luxembourg Museum in Paris launched an exhibition intended to put that right, underlining the help Léon offered his brother and other impressionists.

There are works from his own collection, which included masterpieces by Monet, such as *Vue de Sainte-Adresse* (View of Sainte-Adresse), from 1864, or *Navires en Réparation* (Boats in a Harbour), from 1873. But there are also other impressionist paintings, such as Pierre-Auguste Renoir’s 1875 work *Paris, l’Institut au Quai Malaquais* (The Institute, Quai Malaquais), or Camille Pissarro’s *Environs de Rouen* (Surroundings of Rouen), from 1883. The exhibition also features a hitherto unknown portrait of Léon painted by Monet in 1874. The catalogue says it makes him look like a headstrong, wealthy provincial.

Monet described his elder brother as “maniacal and tough”, while other acquaintances said he could be difficult. Some descriptions are more flattering, mentioning his “cordial and frank” nature and his “lively and swift intelligence”.

Léon was born in 1836, four years before Claude. While his younger brother became an artist, he studied the chemistry of colours, taking an interest in the synthetic dyes that were revolutionising textile printing at the time.

He spent most of his life in Rouen, where he was head of the French branch of a Swiss chemical and colouring firm and became an influential local figure. As well as being among the first significant collectors of impressionist works, Léon also helped to promote them, organising exhibitions in Rouen and inviting his brother to paint in the city.

His support was important. *Impression, Sunrise*, the 1872 Monet work seen as the foundation of impressionism, had been denounced by some critics as an insult to art, and the movement was scarcely richly rewarded at the time.

“It’s never been known before, but without Léon there would not have really been a Monet the artist the world knows today,” said Géraldine Lefebvre, the exhibition curator at the Luxembourg Museum. “His rich big brother supported him in the first period of his life when he had no money or clients and was starving.”



Art historians had long assumed that the brothers fell out at an early age. Lefebvre says the correspondence featured in the exhibition shows they remained close for much longer. They fell out only when Monet’s son, Jean, went to work for Léon’s company. Monet thought his son deserved a better career and blamed the chemicals for ruining his health. Jean died in 1914.

The brothers never saw each other again and Monet refused to attend Léon’s funeral in 1917. He later wrote that he regretted not having seen his brother one last time to tell him “to forget everything that disunited us”.

French can’t get enough of upmarket beaujolais

Adam Sage

Beaujolais may long have been synonymous with cheap and cheerful nouveau but the area has undergone a move upmarket in recent years.

Production has been reduced, quality has improved, wines are left to age and beaujolais bottles have become popular with connoisseurs — almost too popular, in fact.

Local winemakers say that a combination of small harvests and rising demand is leaving drinkers frustrated and unable to buy enough beaujolais to quench their thirst.

“We don’t have enough wine,” said Jean-Marc Lafont, the owner of a vineyard in Lantignié, a village in the Beaujolais, who added that stocks of his finest bottles were particularly low. “We sell more than we produce.”

Beaujolais never thought it would have this sort of rich man’s problem. For decades, the area to the north of Lyons in central France was known for the mass production of low-cost and not very good wines.

Locals hit upon beaujolais nouveau as a way of getting rid of surpluses, harvesting their grapes at the end of summer, pressing them and selling the bottles in November. The idea went down well in countries such as Japan but helped to give beaujolais a tacky image among wine-lovers in France.

A decade or so ago the area decided to change tack. The land covered by vines has been reduced from 18,000 hectares in 2013 to 14,500 hectares, and production has declined from 750,000 hectolitres to 510,000 hectolitres last year. At the same time, the area’s vineyards have been making better and costlier wines. Most now sell their bottles for at least €10, and some for hundreds of euros.

Local winemakers say global warming has helped their move upmarket, with their gamay grape variety benefiting from hotter conditions. Philippe Bardet, deputy chairman of Inter Beaujolais, the local winemakers’ federation, told Le Parisien: “The grapes are riper thanks to the sun and give red wines that are fleshier, tempting [and] silky with rounder and more mature tannins. You can say that global warming has done us a lot of good.”

Dutch farmers reap poll rewards

Netherlands

Bruno Waterfield

A populist party set up by farmers has made huge gains in Dutch elections, in a sign of public dissatisfaction with the socially liberal ruling coalition.

The BoerBurgerBeweging (Farmer-Citizen Movement), also known as the BBB, won almost 20 per cent of the vote, giving it 15 seats in the Senate, the upper house of parliament.

A left-wing Green-Labour alliance is also on course to win 15 Senate seats, but the coalition of the prime minister, Mark Rutte, is projected to lose eight, leaving it with 24 seats.

The result is a big personal victory for Caroline van der Plas, the BBB leader, who told supporters last night: “This isn’t normal, but actually it is! It’s all normal citizens who voted.”

The BBB opposes government plans to cut harmful emissions by reducing livestock numbers and buying out farms. However, its remit has broadened to embrace traditional, conservative Dutch social and moral values. These include opposing immigration and calling for a ban on Muslim women wearing the burka.



Caroline van der Plas, leader of the BBB, celebrates the election results

Van der Plas said the result meant an end to “diktat from the Hague” and added: “Nobody can ignore us any longer. Voters have spoken out very clearly against this government’s policies.” The result was a heavy defeat for Rutte who, after more than 12 years in the job, is the country’s longest-serving prime minister.

He indicated that he would not make concessions to the BBB and would seek new political allies. “I think the cabinet can remain stable in the coming years, because we have parties that want to take responsibility,” he said, hinting at a coalition with the left in the Senate.

Marleen de Rooy, a correspondent for the Dutch broadcaster NOS, said: “The historic gain of the BBB is the result of many protest votes. In many provinces, people have the feeling that they are not being heard.”

Ben Coates, an Anglo-Dutch commentator, said: “Many of us sympathise with farmers who work hard to feed us and sometimes get a bad deal in return. It’s just a shame that they are now represented by people who hold so many extreme views. Very popular does not always mean very good.”

Schoolgirls admit fatal stabbing of 12-year-old

Germany

David Crossland Berlin

Two girls aged 12 and 13 have confessed to the murder of a 12-year-old who was found stabbed to death on Sunday in a case that has shocked Germany.

Police said the girl who died, Luise, was stabbed more than 30 times with a small knife in woods near the small town of Freudenberg and died from blood loss. The girls, who have not been named, are too young to be prosecuted and have been taken into care. They are reported to have attended the same school as Luise, and the older girl is said to have been in the same class as her.

Asked about a possible motive, Florian Locker, the officer heading the investigation, told a news conference: “What children regard as a motive doesn’t necessarily have to count as one for adults.” According to media reports, Luise had been friends with her killers but had fallen out with them.

“After more than 40 years in the job you still get cases that leave you speechless,” Jürgen Süs, the deputy president of the Koblenz police directorate, said.

Luise’s parents reported her missing on Saturday after she failed to return home from visiting the 13-year-old suspect at her home 3km away.

According to Bild newspaper, the 13-year-old returned home and rang Luise’s parents to claim that Luise had left her at 5.30pm and that she was worried because Luise had not messaged her to say she had got back safely.

Police said the two girls began making contradictory statements and confessed on Monday. Reports said the 13-year-old had forced the younger suspect to help her.

Labrador no longer America's best friend

French bulldogs have ended the labrador retriever's record 31-year reign as America's favourite dog (Keiran Southern writes).

The American Kennel Club said 108,000 of the sturdy bat-eared, squash-faced pets were newly registered last year, beating labradors by more than 21,000. "They're comical, friendly, loving little dogs," Patty Sosa, of the French Bull Dog Club of America, said: ideal for city living and requiring little grooming or exercise.

Twenty-five years ago French bulldogs were not even in the top 75 most-owned breeds in the US; now they account for about one in seven registrations.

Celebrity owners such as Lady Gaga, Leonardo DiCaprio, Reese Witherspoon, Megan Thee Stallion and the US congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez have helped to make the breed a sought-after accessory, and last year US television audiences watched a French bulldog named Winston claim second place at the prestigious Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show.

The dogs are also popular with thieves, however. Lady Gaga's dog walker survived a shooting in 2021 when her pets Koji and Gustav were taken in 2021. The singer offered a $500,000 reward for their return and was later reunited with them.

Frenchies are prone to breathing, spinal, eye and skin problems but Dr Carrie Stefaniak, a Wisconsin-based vet who is on the French Bull Dog Club of America's health committee, said they could be very fit and active. "They don't have to be sedentary dogs that can't breathe,"she said.

LESIA KAPINOSOVA/GETTY IMAGES



French bulldogs have risen from being outside the top 75 breeds 25 years ago to ending the labrador's 31-year reign as top dog. Their fans include the actress Reese Witherspoon





Portugal has been making wine for centuries, with some estimates placing the first planting of vines as far back as 2000 BC. The Basto and Douro regions are perhaps the best known and offer rich landscapes and fascinating history to discerning visitors.

Led by our expert guide, Lina Ferreira, immerse yourself in atmospheric Porto and indulge in a voyage of taste and discovery through the verdant Douro Valley, where the famous Port wines are produced. Venture into the region known as Terras de Basto, home of Portugal's 'young' wine, vinho verde, and stay in handpicked hotels including the five-star Hotel Douro Scala, which boasts exceptional views over the valley. The perfect combination of leisurely walks and authentic cultural visits provide a memorable introduction to this lush, captivating country, once a dominant trading power in the world.

*Prices correct at time of going to press. Prices listed are based on two sharing a twin/double room. Single supplement on request. Additional dates may be available, please call for details. Offer subject to availability and prices may fluctuate. Prices are correct at time of publication, and subject to confirmation at time of booking. Operated by and subject to the booking conditions of Exodus Travels, ABTA Y0751, ATOL 25825, a company wholly independent of News UK. ^Save £150pp when booking through Times Travel - quote TIMES150 at time of booking. This offer is not combinable with any other offers, including Loyalty Discounts.

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BlackBerry's tale of towering ambition with tiny buttons

Canada
Will Pavia

Julius Caesar rose to rule an empire and Napoleon Bonaparte ascended from a minor military post to become master of Europe. But there is another epic story of global domination — involving Canadians.

It is told in *BlackBerry*, a film about the smartphones that were for a while regarded by users including President Obama and Kim Kardashian as the greatest invention since sliced bread.

"OK, picture a cell phone and an email machine all in one thing," says Douglas Fregin, one of the heroes of this story, as he pitches the idea to a Harvard Business School graduate named Jim Balsillie, in a trailer for the film.

"There is a free wireless internet signal all across North America and nobody has figured out how to use it," he declares. "It's like the force," he adds, and then after a pause inquires: "Sorry, have you seen *Star Wars*?"

Fregin, who is played by Matt Johnson, the film's director, was a co-founder with an electrical engineer named Mike Lazaridis of Research in Motion, a small tech company in the city of Waterloo, Ontario.

"I know how to market it and I know who to sell it to, but I want 50 per cent of the company, and I've got to be CEO," Balsillie tells them during a meeting in a diner. In a later scene, an executive examining a prototype, apparently held together with tape, is encouraged to "try typing with your thumbs".

This unlikely tale of towering ambition and tiny buttons is based on *Losing the Signal*, a 2015 book about the rise and fall of BlackBerry by the journalists Sean Silcoff and Jacquie McNish, who were then at The Globe and Mail newspaper.

The film, shown at the Berlin Film Festival last month and again this week in Texas at the South by Southwest festival, has been hailed as Canada's answer to *The Social Network*, the film about the founding of Facebook. The early success of *BlackBerry* has been attributed to Lazaridis's unusual idea that they should focus the device entirely on emails and "revel in its limitations". Soon BlackBerry was riding in pockets in every corridor of power. Barack Obama, on becoming president, said he could not part with his own handset. "I'm still clinging to my BlackBerry," he said. "They are gonna pry it out of my hands." Oprah Winfrey said she could not live without it, and even Queen Elizabeth was said to use one.

The iceberg for this Titanic appeared in early 2007, in the shape of the iPhone — a smartphone with many times more computing power that could manage email and the internet.

Ben Petrie, who plays an engineer in the film, told The Globe and Mail: "Canada famously has an inferiority complex, and we've made a movie about a phone with an inferiority complex. This movie feels Canadian in a way that I'm proud of."

Lessons from the rise and fall of BlackBerry, leading article, page 27

Grumpy zebra tried to rip off my arm

United States
Will Pavia New York

The call for help came from Ohio where a man lay in a field, bleeding heavily, with his attacker still at large.

"I got attacked by a zebra," Ronald Clifton told an operator.

"You got attacked by a what?" she asked.

"A zebra!" he shouted, before adding, in case she was unfamiliar with them: "A horse!"

Clifton's zebras were well-known locally and occasionally drew gawkers who were warned not to feed them by signs at his field south of Columbus. On Sunday evening one of them attacked him and almost bit his arm off. "Is your arm still attached?" the dispatcher asked. He replied: "I don't think so. Come before it gets me again."

Michael Oberley, a deputy from the Pickaway County Sheriff's Office, arrived and tried to place his car between the victim and the herd of five or six zebras. As he did so "a large male zebra charged my driver side door," he wrote in a report on the incident. He drove it away by blasting his air horn and sirens, and then went to administer first aid to Clifton. He and another deputy helped him to an ambulance that had pulled up.

Then a zebra appeared over the crest of the hill. "Hey sarge! He's coming back," one of the officers shouted, in body camera footage released by the sheriff's office. "Shoot the dumb son of a bitch if you have to," said another man, identified as Clifton's son-in-law. The man said the zebra, said to be agressive, "probably" wouldn't attack them.

As he spoke the zebra veered towards them. Sergeant Stacey Eitel could be heard to shout "Hey!" in an apparent attempt to drive it back. When this failed he levelled his rifle at the zebra and fired.

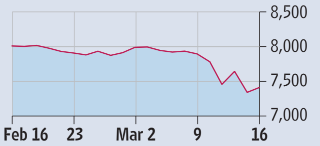
"He come up just now on me, and all these people here," Eitel, sounding upset, could be heard saying. "I had to make a decision. I put a slug right between his eyes."

Lieutenant Jonathan Strawser, of the sheriff's office, said Clifton's arm had been saved but he remained in hospital yesterday.

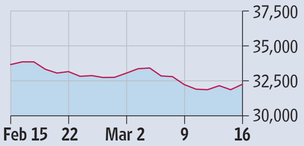
Business

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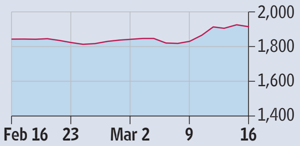


Dow Jones
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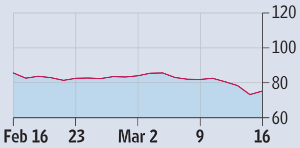


COMMODITIES

Gold
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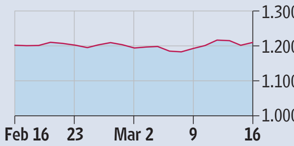


Brent crude (6pm)
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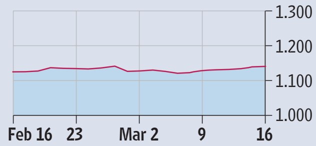


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John Lewis axes staff bonus and warns of job cuts after £234m loss

Isabella Fish Retail Editor

The John Lewis Partnership has warned of fresh job cuts after it scrapped its staff bonus for the second time in three years and reported only the second annual loss in its history.

The employee-owned group said it made an underlying pre-tax loss of £78 million in the year to January 28, compared with analysts' expectations of a £50 million loss, and a £181 million profit the year before. Write-downs of the value of Waitrose supermarket stores after poor trading took the overall loss much higher, to £234 million.

Dame Sharon White, the chairwoman, warned of job losses. She said profits had been hit by a £180 million rise in costs driven by higher commodity prices, energy bills and staff wages, as well as inflationary pressures, property write-downs, supply chain challenges and a fire in one of its warehouses.

White did not specify how many jobs could go, but said: "As we get more efficient, as less time has to be spent on processes, the replenishment of our stores and online orders, that inevitably means less time needed and fewer partners."

She apologised to the partnership's 74,000 staff for not paying an annual bonus for only the second time since 1953, blaming it on "a tough set of results". Last year the bonus was worth 3 per cent of a partner's salary. In good years it was as high as 24 per cent.

Total sales were down 2 per cent to £12.25 billion as its shoppers also "felt the pain of inflation". Waitrose sales fell 3 per cent to £7.31 billion and John Lewis sales rose 0.2 per cent to £4.94 billion.

The partnership said that the online growth of the pandemic had been "partly reversed" and that shoppers were buying more groceries from discounters.

The figures were published a day after the parent group of John Lewis and Waitrose appointed the former Hovis boss Nish Kankiwala as its first group chief executive.

Out of stock, letters, page 26
Inflation 'hit like hurricane', page 38

Wall Street titans rescue First Republic

Investment banks in $30bn plan to calm markets

Patrick Hosking, Ben Martin
Helen Cahill

A consortium of Wall Street's biggest investment banks rescued First Republic Bank with $30 billion in deposits last night to calm financial markets after the recent failure of three US banks and continuing fallout from Credit Suisse.

A statement from the group said that JPMorgan Chase, Citigroup, Bank of America, Wells Fargo, Goldman Sachs and Morgan Stanley were involved with others in the rescue of the California-based bank.

The bailout was initiated by the banks but had government encouragement. Jamie Dimon, the boss of JP Morgan, met Janet Yellen, the US Treasury secretary, yesterday to discuss First Republic, according to Bloomberg.

Founded in 1985, First Republic had $212 billion in assets and $176.4 billion in deposits at the end of last year, according to its annual report.

First Republic's shares had a volatile day closing up $3.11, or 10 per cent, at $34.27 during normal trading hours but then losing 18 per cent, or $6.45, to $27.85 in late trading on Wall Street.

While attention in the US was focused on First Republic, the problems affecting Credit Suisse dominated the headlines in Europe.

After the Swiss central bank stepped in to provide a £45 billion lifeline to the country's second biggest bank, it emerged that the chairman of Credit Suisse was facing three class actions for allegedly misleading shareholders in the months leading up to the crisis.

Axel Lehmann was accused of making materially false and/or misleading statements when he told investors in December that the outflows plaguing the lender and contributing to the jitters over its financial strength had stopped.

Yesterday the Swiss authorities extended a lifeline of up to SwFr 50 billion (£45 billion) to the bank in an effort to restore the confidence of depositors, bondholders and shareholders. Neither Lehmann nor Credit Suisse has commented on the lawsuits.

Other banks have also come under pressure amid reports that hedge fund managers are adding to their "down bets" on the sector. Bridgewater Associates, Millennium Management and Marshall Wace are among those intensifying short positions in European banking shares, according to data from Breakout Point. Short-sellers had amassed bearish positions worth more than $15.7 billion against European banks by Tuesday, according to S&P Global Market Intelligence.

The failure last week of two American banks including its 16th biggest, Silicon Valley Bank, has fed concerns that other institutions could be forced to crystallise losses on bonds to pay defecting depositors.

While Credit Suisse has a different business model, scandals over several years and its admission this week of "material weaknesses" in its internal controls battered confidence in the institution.

While the rescue loans will give Credit Suisse some breathing space, analysts questioned whether it could survive as an independent entity.

JP Morgan said "the status quo is no longer an option" and suggested the larger UBS could bid for it.

Credit Suisse pays for decade of easy money, leading article, page 27
Too big to fail, pages 34-35

FRIEDEMANN VOGEL/EPA



Going up The European Central Bank, led by Christine Lagarde, raised borrowing costs to a 15 year-high of 3 per cent Page 36

Royal Mail boss misled us, say MPs

Alex Ralph

The head of Royal Mail has been accused of misleading a committee of MPs investigating claims that digital devices carried by postal workers are used to track their performance.

In a report that raises the pressure on Simon Thompson, Royal Mail's chief executive, the Commons business, energy and industrial strategy committee also concludes that the loss-making company "systemically failed to deliver" parts of its universal service obligation to deliver letters six days a week. MPs have asked Ofcom to investigate.

Darren Jones, the Labour chairman of the committee, said: "The failures in company policy which Mr Thompson has admitted to can only be due to either an unacceptable level of incompetence or an unacceptable level of cluelessness." The findings were a result of two parliamentary evidence sessions with Thompson.

The report concludes that he was not "wholly accurate" in his testimony about the use of digital assistants to track and discipline workers. The handheld devices were introduced in 2007 for postal staff to scan barcodes and take customers' signatures.

The committee's report says that "data has been used to track the speed at which postal workers deliver their post and, subsequently, for performance management, both explicitly in disciplinary cases and as a tool by local managers to dissuade staff from stopping during their rounds". MPs have asked the information commissioner to check the legal basis for the collection and use of the data.

The findings are the latest setback for the company. It has already lost about £200 million in a pay dispute with the Communication Workers Union, which represents 115,000 staff.

A spokesman for Ofcom said it was "very concerned" about Royal Mail's recent performance "and won't hesitate to take enforcement action if required".

Royal Mail said it was "proud to deliver the universal service" and rejected the suggestion that it may have misled the committee, adding: "Royal Mail is losing a million pounds a day and customer behaviours have fundamentally changed. Letter volumes have decreased from more than 20 billion letters a year in 2004-5 to approximately eight billion letters per year now, posing real risks to the financial sustainability of the universal service."

Royal Mail boss handed explosive package by MPs' inquiry, pages 40-41

Need to know

1 More than a million NHS staff will be awarded a pay rise and a cash bonus in a breakthrough that ministers believe offers a path to ending months of strikes in the public services. Rishi Sunak said a 5 per cent pay increase from next month and a payment of at least £1,655 for nurses, paramedics and other frontline staff workers was "a fair deal" that showed other unions he was serious about ending strikes. **Page 1**

2 Labour's pledge to reverse the abolition of the lifetime allowance on pension savings could prompt more doctors and professionals to retire early in a "gold rush" before the next election, experts have warned. Jeremy Hunt announced in the budget on Wednesday that he was scrapping the £1.07 million tax-free pensions lifetime allowance in an attempt to encourage professionals back to work. **Page 1**

3 The growing desire of the super-rich to personalise their luxury cars or have them built from scratch helped Bentley to another year of record profits in 2022. A record production run of 15,174 cars rolled off its assembly line in Crewe, with much fatter margins on its popular Bentayga 4x4s and other models. **Page 3**

4 Credit Suisse, Switzerland's second biggest bank, has become the first big financial institution to tap an emergency lifeline since the banking crisis of 2008. Axel Lehmann, chairman, is facing three class actions for allegedly misleading shareholders in the months leading up to the crisis at the bank. **Pages 2, 33, leading article, page 27**

5 The John Lewis Partnership has warned of fresh job cuts after it scrapped staff bonuses for the second time in three years after its second annual loss. The employee-owned group said it made an underlying pre-tax loss of £78 million in the year to January 28. **Letters, page 26, pages 33, 38**

6 Simon Thompson, the chief executive of Royal Mail, has been accused of misleading a Commons committee investigating claims that handheld digital devices carried by post workers on their rounds are used to track their performance. **Pages 33, 40-41**

7 The European Central Bank has defied market pressure to ease up on interest rates by pushing ahead with a bumper 50 basis-point rise to borrowing costs, despite turmoil in banking stocks. **Page 36**

8 Sam Bankman-Fried, 31, the founder of the collapsed cryptocurrency exchange FTX, received more than $2 billion from the business's entities, according to new court filings. **Page 37**

9 Deliveroo fell to a loss of almost £300 million last year but said it is making "excellent progress" on its path to profitability. **Page 39, Tempus, page 42**

10 Hurricane Energy, a North Sea oil company that nearly collapsed, is being taken over in a deal valuing it at up to £249 million. **Page 41**

Too big to fail conundrum continues to haunt banks

Credit Suisse is among the global elite of lenders, so why has it come close to collapse, asks **Patrick Hosking**

Just four weeks ago, the man in charge of keeping the financial world placid, Klaas Knot, chairman of the Financial Stability Board, wrote to G20 finance ministers and central bankers with a guardedly optimistic message.

"The post-global financial crisis reform agenda co-ordinated by the FSB, working with the sectoral standard-setting bodies, has gone a long way in bolstering the resilience of the global financial system," he wrote.

Sure, there were worries, from cyberthreats to crypto, wrote Knot, who is president of the Dutch central bank, but he gave no indication that he expected an imminent blow-up in the core banking system, one that would send tremors through financial markets.

Indeed, most recent regulatory concern has been focused on the non-bank sector. Commodity firms, after the turmoil in the nickel market, and privately controlled hedge funds, after the Archegos collapse, have come under the fiercest scrutiny.

Banks, it was supposed, were relatively solid, bolstered by huge injections of equity capital since the banking crisis, boasting iron-clad balance sheets and bound by much tougher rules on their liquidity arrangements.

Yet, it was a bank, America's 16th biggest, Silicon Valley Bank, that failed last week, and two other smaller US banks, Silvergate and Signature Bank, which had to be shut within days after they too were hit by depositor panics.

Now, another much bigger bank, Credit Suisse, is listing badly, forced to take an emergency loan of up to SwFr50 billion (£44 billion) from the Swiss authorities. And this is not just any bank, but one categorised by regulators as "systemically important" and therefore supposedly subject to even stricter safety rules.

Credit Suisse is in the select club of 30 banks labelled G-Sibs or globally systemically important banks. These are banks at the very heart of the world's financial plumbing, ones capable of transmitting the most damage to others if something went wrong. From Britain only HSBC, Barclays and Standard Chartered are in this premiership.

It seems improbable that just 15 years after a banking crisis that cost the world's taxpayers billions in rescue recapitalisation plans and badly tripped up global economic growth, society could once again be worrying about the soundness of large licenced deposit-takers.

But they are. What is more, some very senior finance figures believe this is not a short-lived scare, but could be a sign of things to come. Larry Fink, chief executive of the world's biggest investment institution, BlackRock, said this week that he believed we could be at the start of a prolonged period of dominoes falling.

He wrote in a letter to shareholders that the present scare may turn out to be similar to the start of the "savings and loans" crisis in America in the late 1980s and early 1990s, when over a period of more than a decade, more than 1,000 (mostly small) financial institutions failed. This could be "a slow rolling crisis" that just keeps going, he cautioned.

Then, as now, it has been the unexpectedly abrupt tightening of monetary policy that seems to have wrongfooted financial institutions. Then it was the Fed chairman Paul Volcker's hawkish lifting of interest rates to tackle inflation. That approach has been repeated in the past 15 months in rising rates and the reversal of quantitative easing by global authorities.

SVB was poleaxed because it had bought long-dated US treasury bonds with the flood of deposits coming in from cashed-up technology company clients in the good times. The rise in market interest rates was lethal: those bonds dropped in value while a flood of withdrawals forced it to sell the bonds and crystallise those losses.

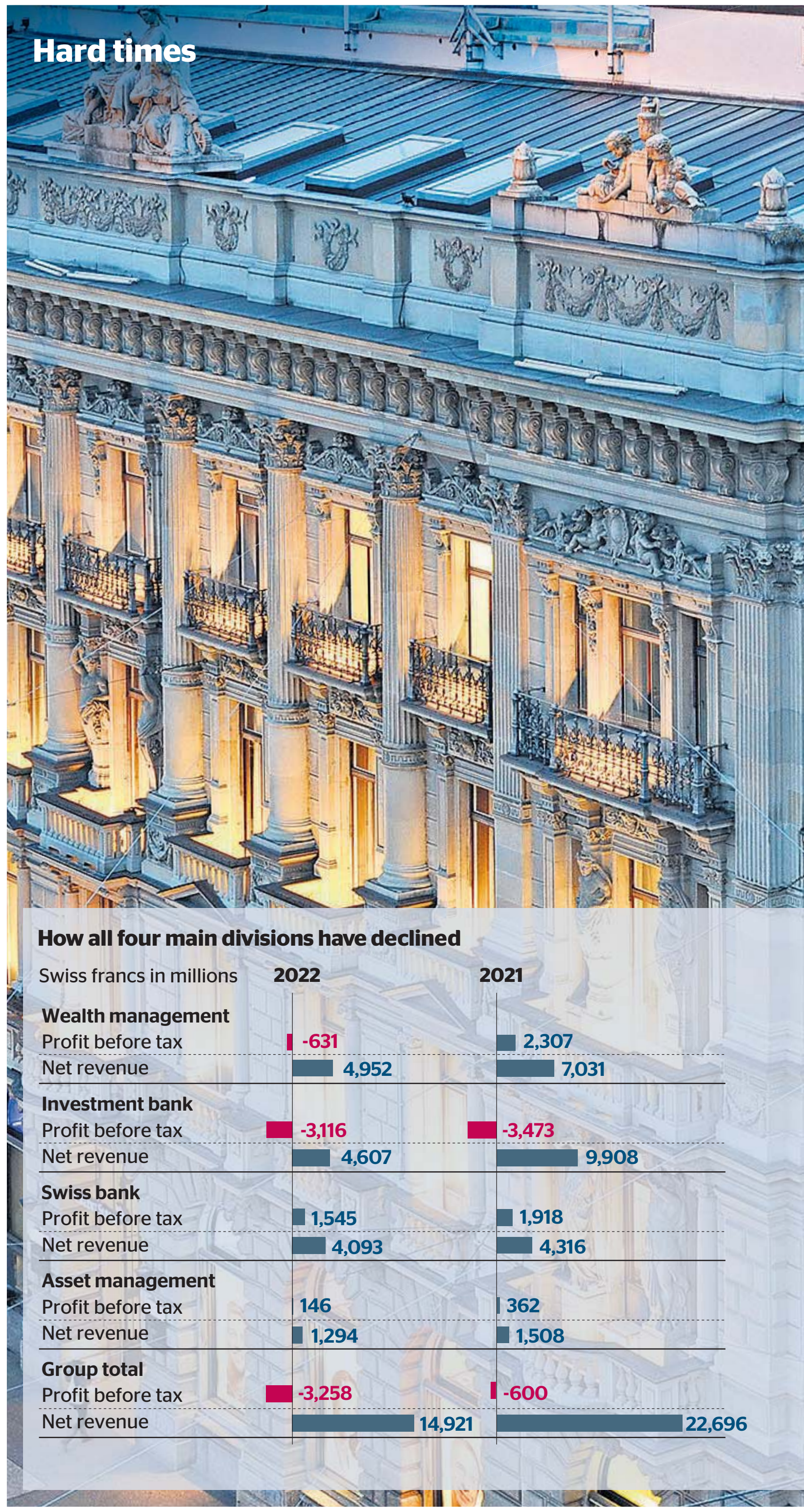
For many bankers the failure of SVB to hedge against the risk of rising interest rates through derivatives known as swaps is mystifying. They argue this was therefore a one-off case of negligence.

Other banks, including Credit Suisse, will have had much more sophisticated liquidity matching arrangements, it is argued. Certainly, the Swiss regulator Finma was suggesting so, confirming yesterday that the bank "meets the higher capital and liquidity requirements applicable to systemically important banks".

The bank itself went further, announcing that its average liquidity coverage ratio had been 144 per cent over the past three months and had actually improved in recent days to hit 150 per cent as of Tuesday. It had dropped as low as 135 per cent last year. Under Basel 3 banking rules, banks must hold sufficient liquid assets to fund 100 per cent of expected cash outflows over 30 days. This requirement has been gradually lifted from 70 per cent in 2016.



Klaas Knot said the sector was resilient



How all four main divisions have declined

Swiss francs in millions	2022	2021
Wealth management		
Profit before tax	-631	2,307
Net revenue	4,952	7,031
Investment bank		
Profit before tax	-3,116	-3,473
Net revenue	4,607	9,908
Swiss bank		
Profit before tax	1,545	1,918
Net revenue	4,093	4,316
Asset management		
Profit before tax	146	362
Net revenue	1,294	1,508
Group total		
Profit before tax	-3,258	-600
Net revenue	14,921	22,696

Credit Suisse was, it added, "conservatively positioned against interest rate risks. The volume of duration fixed income securities is not material compared to the overall HQLA (high quality liquid assets) portfolio and, in addition, is fully hedged for moves in interest rates."

In other words, as it did not quite say, it was no SVB.

But the catalogue of scandals plaguing Credit Suisse in recent years has dented confidence in the bank and its official numbers, as has the latest admission this week that it had "material weaknesses" in its internal controls and that it would be loss-making again in the current year.

According to Guy Foster, chief strategist at RBC Brewin Dolphin, Credit Suisse's position is "radically different" from SVB and Signature. "Its problems relate to its profitability and the repeated brushes with controversy, which have eroded its reputation as a conservative and competent banker."

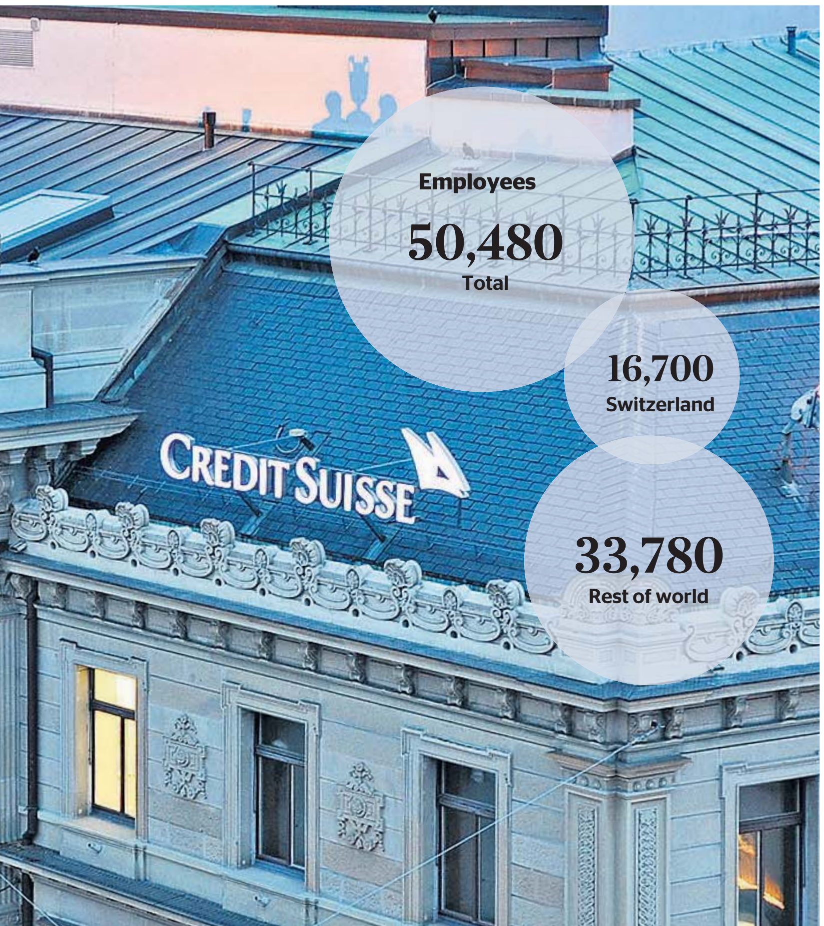
But every bank ultimately has a liquidity problem if it fails to convince its depositors and other funders. According to Jerry del Missier, a veteran of the 2008 crisis: "This looks to have always been a liquidity issue, largely created by mismanaged communication which conveyed a lack of understanding and seriousness in sorting out the myriad of issues facing the institution." Del Missier was one of the top brass at Barclays and is chief investment officer at the hedge fund group Copper Street Capital.

The decision by the European Central Bank to push up its base rate by half a percentage point yesterday was seized on as evidence that policymakers cannot be too worried. If policymakers had thought the tightening could have set off more tremors, they would have been more cautious.

But any more wobbles and Credit Suisse's days as an independent entity are numbered, analysts say. The Swiss authorities will be acutely conscious of the reputational damage being done to one of the country's most important industries. A rescue by a larger, stronger rival such as UBS could be a marriage worth orchestrating and a price worth paying.

For a G-Sib to submit to a rescue takeover would be embarrassing, but far better than the full humiliation of a G-Sib failing in a disorderly way.

Fourteen years ago the world's finance ministers met in Pittsburgh to set up the FSB to try to address the "too big to fail problem" and the risk that the bill for bank incompetence or recklessness falls to taxpayers. Events in Zurich this week suggest the conundrum has not gone away.





Focus on facts, boss urges staff

Helen Cahill

In an effort to calm nerves, Ulrich Körner, Credit Suisse's chief executive, has told thousands of staff to "focus on the facts". He impressed on his employees the importance of communicating "the strengths of the bank", shortly after it agreed a support package from the Swiss National Bank.

Credit Suisse's woes have been under the spotlight in the UK because it is a big employer in London and runs significant investment banking activities from its 21-storey building in Canary Wharf.

Credit Suisse International is the bank's largest UK subsidiary. It has weighted assets of $62 billion and employs about 5,000 people here. The lender operates businesses including cash equities, credit, global trading, capital markets and advisory services.

The division had revenues of $1.4 billion for the first six months of last year. The UK subsidiary made a $5.2 billion loss in the first six months of 2021 as it took a $4.4 billion provision for losses tied to the collapse of Archegos. It returned to profit of £175 million in the six months ending in June last year.

Amanda Gray, co-head of financial services at the law firm Addleshaw Goddard, said: "Contagion is the biggest risk here and the ring-fencing put in place after the financial crisis has helped with that. The UK financial institutions are pretty well-capitalised now so I'm not sensing any panic.

"Every time a bank has problems globally there's a need to look at what the contagion is, and what the knock-on implications are, but one would hope the work that has been done in the UK will put us in a good place to ride out the current turbulence."

The Bank of England is in touch with the Swiss regulator Finma.

Gray said: "[Credit Suisse] will be trying to reassure their clients, but there are other sources of liquidity. If we see a number of international banks getting into trouble over the next period then the pool of available liquidity tightens and that becomes a problem. But I don't think that's where we are at the moment."

Takeover may be the only solution

Behind the story

Credit Suisse's woes have prompted renewed speculation about whether the bank could be sold to a rival to secure its future (Helen Cahill writes).

Executives want to use the breathing space given by the liquidity injection from the Swiss central bank to push through a restructuring plan and stabilise the lender.

But analysts say that the central bank has not provided enough support and that more radical action is required to save Credit Suisse.

JP Morgan analysts warned the "status quo is no longer an option" for Credit Suisse and that it might be taken over by UBS. They said Credit Suisse would need to hive off its domestic bank to satisfy the competition authorities before any deal with UBS and would incur a £27 billion charge from the closure of its investment bank.

The Swiss lender has been knocked by "market confidence issues" with its investment banking strategy and "ongoing franchise erosion" after substantial losses from the collapses of the supply chain finance firm Greensill and the family office Archegos Capital Management.

One Credit Suisse bondholder said the central bank's intervention should be enough to support the bank and allow for more debt buybacks.

"UBS has gone back to being a Swiss bank and a private wealth manager with a very small investment bank. It looks like Credit Suisse is going to follow that and become another version of the very utilitarian UBS.

"There's been some speculation that Credit Suisse could be jammed together with UBS but I don't see that. The Swiss national regulator wouldn't want one very large bank. It would prefer two smaller banks."

Another banking source suggested that while Credit Suisse was not "particularly viable" on its own there was also little chance of a full takeover by UBS because the combined group "would dominate the Swiss market". "Credit Suisse is too big to be bought by anyone as one entity and would trip up on all sorts of competition issues. I'd bet it's a carve-up," the source added.

Credit Suisse's strategy is to maintain control of its Swiss bank, wealth and asset management divisions, and some of its trading businesses. It plans to spin off its advisory, leveraged finance, equities and credit products businesses under the Credit Suisse First Boston brand by 2025.

But JP Morgan's analysts appear sceptical. They argue that the multibillion-pound cost of restructuring is too high. Credit Suisse is also trying to stem deposit and asset outflows and faces losses at a wealth management division that used to make profits of £1.6 billion.

A market source said: "Credit Suisse has looked like the sick bank of Europe for some time with all of these scandals. The due diligence on a takeover is not going to get done over a weekend. It will be very interesting to watch it play out."

Swiss lender is a reputation risk

BUSINESS COMMENTARY *Tracey Boles*



It's hard not to associate what is happening at Credit Suisse with Switzerland's finest holey cheeses despite the crisis-hit bank now having access to an emergency loan of up to £45 billion.

Last year, the Zurich-based group suffered its worst annual loss since 2008 and it expects further losses this year. On Tuesday it revealed it had found "material weaknesses" in its internal financial reporting controls. Just a day later its shares fell by up to 30 per cent after Saudi National Bank, its biggest shareholder, said it would not be stumping up more funds, triggering a crisis of investor confidence.

A lingering worry is that more customers will leave the business as concerns about its financial health deepen. The last time there was a panic about Credit Suisse's viability, in October, it suffered big outflows: a net SwFr 110.5 billion were pulled during the fourth quarter.

Any outflows would weaken the business despite this week's moves by the Swiss National Bank and the regulator Finma to stabilise the situation by pledging to provide Credit Suisse with liquidity. Credit Suisse itself announced public tender offers for part of its debt in an attempt to boost confidence.

Saudi National Bank even tried a spot of damage limitation yesterday by saying that the market turmoil in shares of the Swiss lender was "unwarranted" and attributing Wednesday's price falls to "panic".

Panic or not, surely Credit Suisse cannot stay as it is for much longer? Analysts think the status quo is no longer an option although Ulrich Körner, the chief executive, is sticking to his "strategic transformation" plan for a simpler and more focused bank. The new liquidity line has certainly bought him some time to put the organisation on a more solid financial footing.

Yet — to revisit the cheese metaphor — a bank that looks increasingly crumbly is attached to a wealth management arm with a much firmer texture. That still leaves the question of what happens next for the 167-year-old institution. Perhaps its compatriot UBS can be persuaded to act as a white knight; the Swiss National Bank may even have to intervene further. Yet a hefty litigation overhang from past scandals will be a bitter pill for anyone to swallow. More blue-marbled Bleuchâtel cheese than the sweeter Gruyère.

With the wider banking system vulnerable to shock after the failure of Silicon Valley Bank last Friday and national pride on the line, a lender of last resort may just have to stomach it. With £1.1 trillion of deposits and investments, Credit Suisse is in principle a much bigger concern for the global economy than the regional US banks that were in the firing line last week. It is systemically important but trust in it is rapidly evaporating.

No one wants a rerun of the 2008 banking crisis that swiftly turned into a much broader financial one. The policy response to this situation will have severe consequences for Switzerland as well as the reputation of banking.

Better prospects

Oil exploration is never a safe bet, just ask bosses at Hurricane Energy which was sold to Prax yesterday for £250 million (report, page 41). Things haven't always gone to plan for the former stock market darling that was meant to win big in the North Sea.

Founded in 2004, Hurricane set out to exploit oil that lies beneath conventional reservoirs. Its initial estimates for potential west of Shetland reserves were so good that the explorer was valued at £1 billion at one point. Yet its Lancaster field failed to live up to expectations and is producing just 7,710 barrels of oil per day.

The Prax deal represents jam today for long suffering shareholders. There's also potential jam tomorrow in the form of a revenue-sharing agreement. Prax may reopen a second well at Lancaster and is committed to building a sizeable upstream business in the North Sea. The acquisition of Hurricane could be the first of several deals. Perhaps Hurricane will finally be the longed-for gusher for its investors.

Eye of the storm

Talking of hurricanes, one seems to have blown through the John Lewis Partnership, which yesterday reported a loss of £78 million. The reason for the storm damage? According to the chairwoman, Dame Sharon White, the hurricane is inflation.

Yet the problems at Waitrose supermarkets and John Lewis department stores cannot be pinned solely on the cost of living crisis; competition is coming at it from all sides, from a resurgent M&S to the discounters Aldi and Lidl. The partnership's response is to simplify the business at Waitrose and invest in price.

The group is adding customers and considers itself well positioned for when the cost of living crisis eases. But perhaps they are not its traditional "middle class" clientele. A straw poll yesterday revealed this cohort to have mixed views, and some appear disaffected. Comments included: "I wouldn't go there for anything important but I would go there for wedding lists", and "usually their products are OK but not always". For a retailer that prides itself on quality as well as value, that has to be particularly worrying. More positive comments included: "The staff generally know what they are talking about."

If I were Ms White, I would ask myself whether I should concentrate on what these more traditional customers put store by — service and quality — or continue broadening the offering into what she hopes are profitable new areas. There are no easy answers. In the meantime, she must be crossing her fingers for an improvement in consumer sentiment.

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Alistair Osborne is away

Business

ECB presses on with bumper interest rate rise despite turmoil

Mehreen Khan Economics Editor

The European Central Bank has defied market pressure to ease up on interest rates by pushing ahead with a bumper 50 basis-point rise to borrowing costs, despite turmoil in banking stocks.

The eurozone's monetary authority lifted its main deposit facility interest rate to a post 2008-high of 3 per cent, hours after the embattled bank Credit Suisse said it would borrow up to $54 billion from the Swiss central bank to stave off a share price rout.

In a statement from its governing council, the ECB said the eurozone's "banking sector is resilient, with strong capital and liquidity positions".

In case of any emergency, the ECB said, its "toolkit is fully equipped to provide liquidity support to the euro area financial system if needed and to preserve the smooth transmission of monetary policy".

The statement said: "The governing council is monitoring market tensions closely and stands ready to respond as necessary to preserve price stability and financial stability in the euro area."

The ECB's decision was the first response from a big central bank since tremors shook the banking system last week. The US Federal Reserve will make its decision next Wednesday followed by the Bank of England on Thursday.

European banking stocks, which have recovered from a sharp sell-off on Wednesday, dipped on the ECB's decision while the euro was up 0.4 per cent against the dollar in late-afternoon trading. Yields on German two-year debt, which are sensitive to interest rate changes, traded flat at 2.4 per cent.

Christine Lagarde, president of the ECB, insisted there was no trade-off between containing inflation through higher interest rates and preserving financial stability using emergency tools such as the provision of cheap loans to the banking sector.

ECB rate-setters have been battling against stubbornly high inflation since Russia's invasion of Ukraine a year ago. A measure of underlying inflationary pressures, which strips out volatile elements such as energy and food, rose last month to 5.6 per cent, emboldening hawkish rate-setters to stick with big rate increases. The governing council said inflation "is projected to remain too high for too long".

Lagarde said: "We are seeing some improvement [in inflation] but frankly not a lot. Core or other dissections of inflation … in particular in services, are not yet heading in a direction that would confirm the inflation outlook that we have."

She said that up to four members of the ECB's governing council had wanted to "give a bit more time" before increasing rates to the highest since the 2008 financial crisis.

There had been some concern that a decision to pare back interest rate rises would raise alarm among markets that the health of Europe's banking system was not assured.

Before the decision, press reports said that Luis de Guindos, the ECB vice-president, had warned European finance ministers that some European banks were vulnerable to rising interest rates. Yesterday, de Guindos said Europe's banking system had "limited exposure" to turmoil in the US banking system.

Lagarde said the ECB had more powerful tools at its disposal to quell financial panic after the US central bank said on Monday that it would insure all deposits at Silicon Valley Bank, the 16th largest US bank, which collapsed last week, and provide banks with the ability to access central bank money using their bonds as collateral.

Responding to the financial stress, the ECB dropped a previous commitment to keep raising rates and instead said its next decisions would be "data-dependent". Lagarde admitted that market panic risked forcing up borrowing costs and having a disinflationary impact on the eurozone economy if banks cut back on their lending.

MICHAEL REYNOLDS/EPA



Janet Yellen, the Treasury secretary, said: "Americans can feel confident that their deposits will be there when they need them"

Banking system is sound, insists Yellen

Mehreen Khan

The US Treasury secretary reassured Americans yesterday that all their deposits would be safe after the second and third largest banking failures in US history.

Speaking for the first time after the government was forced to bail out depositors at three banks, Janet Yellen told Congress that the banking system was "sound".

"I can reassure the members of the committee that our banking system is sound, and that Americans can feel confident that their deposits will be there when they need them," Yellen said on Capitol Hill.

"This week's actions demonstrate our resolute commitment to ensure that depositors' savings remain safe."

The US Federal Reserve and Treasury were forced to insure all deposits at Silicon Valley Bank, Silvergate and Signature Banks after customers withdrew money from the lenders because of fears their assets were falling in value.

To prevent financial contagion, the Fed also offered banks the ability to access billions of central bank cash by posting their bonds as collateral based on the par value of the assets rather than the market price.

The moves did not stop investors dumping shares in European lenders, led by Credit Suisse, on Wednesday. Stock prices stabilised yesterday after the Swiss National Bank pledged emergency support for the lender. The European Central Bank has also said it is ready to offer support to its banks.

The US response to insure all deposits, including those above the $250,000 guaranteed under law, has been privately criticised by European regulators who accuse Washington of ripping up the banking regulations devised during the financial crisis.

Deposit insurance is set at a lower €100,000 in the eurozone and £85,000 in the UK. The US will pay for the bailout using a fee paid by the banks, to ensure no taxpayer money was on the line, Yellen said.

"Shareholders and debtholders are not being protected by the government. Importantly, no taxpayer money is being used or put at risk with this action," she said.

Silicon Valley Bank was the 16th largest lender in the US and was not designated as systemically important enough to be subject to stringent capital rules and regular stress testing from the Fed.

The central bank has announced an investigation into its supervisory rules following the bank's collapse.

"There will be a careful look at what happened in the bank and what initiated this problem, but clearly, the downfall of the bank, the reason it had to be closed, was that it couldn't meet depositors' withdrawal requests," Yellen said.

American companies holding on to workers

Times Business Staff

The number of Americans filing new claims for unemployment benefits fell by more than expected last week, pointing to continued labour market strength.

Initial claims for state unemployment benefits dropped 20,000 to a seasonally adjusted 192,000 for the week ending on March 11, the labour department said. The fall was the largest since July. Economists polled by Reuters had forecast 205,000 claims.

Unadjusted claims declined 21,396 to 217,444. Claims in New York fell 15,305, reversing the previous week's sharp rise, which had been attributed to a midwinter school break.

Despite job cuts by big technology companies, the labour market has remained resilient, with employers generally reluctant to lay off workers after struggling to find labour during the pandemic.

There were notable declines in filings in California, Georgia, Oregon and Minnesota, offsetting significant increases in Indiana and Ohio.

Persistent labour market tightness,

20,000

fewer claims for unemployment benefit
Source: US Department of Labor

with 1.9 job openings for every unemployed person in January, and stubbornly high inflation support the case for the Federal Reserve to continue raising interest rates next week. But the failures of Silicon Valley Bank in California and Signature Bank in New York have led some economists to urge caution.

Other US data struck an upbeat note, with homebuilding rising strongly last month, potentially setting the stage for a spring revival in the housing market. Imported inflation pressures were subdued, but regional manufacturing activity remained depressed.

On the basis of the latest economic data financial markets were yesterday expecting a 25 basis point rate rise at the Fed meeting next week, according to CME Group's FedWatch tool.

"We were already expecting a meaningful slowdown in growth and job gains over the coming months, and the prospect of substantial tightening in credit conditions raises the risk that a soft landing turns into a harder one," Ellen Zentner, the chief US economist at Morgan Stanley in New York, said.

Funding 'too low' to spur investment in renewables

Emily Gosden Energy Editor

A £205 million annual funding package announced yesterday for the next batch of renewable power projects will be insufficient to spur required investment, the government has been told.

Proposed wind, solar, tidal and geothermal electricity projects are expected to compete in this year's auction for contracts that guarantee them a fixed price for electricity.

When the market price is lower, consumers pay subsidies to top up the difference and when the market price is higher, developers pay back the difference.

The £205 million budget is the government's estimate of the maximum subsidies that will be required for the contracts in any year based on its electricity price forecasts.

Renewable UK, the industry body, said: "The budget and parameters … are too low and too tight to unlock all the potential investment in wind, solar and tidal stream projects which the industry could deliver.

"When the US and EU are bending over backwards to offer incentives for renewable energy developers to come to them to build new projects, the UK is sending the wrong investment signals."

Jamie Maule, an analyst at Cornwall Insight, said: "If the high cost of capital cannot be compensated for by an increase in the return, the money will simply not be enough for projects to be successful and could act to stifle competition and deter investors."

Harry Wallop



Free t'ai chi and staff gyms are not the way to re-energise businesses

This week Jeremy Hunt told us that if we got off the sofa or the golf course Britain could become a superpower. I simplify, but only slightly. The big theme of the budget was how to encourage a million or so people back to work, which the chancellor claimed was possible if we reduced our economic inactivity to Swedish levels.

It is true that there are tons of perfectly clever people who could work but either choose not to or are unable to because of illness or caring responsibilities. Figures from the Office for National Statistics this week said that there were 488,000 more economically inactive people compared with before the pandemic. That is a hell of a lot of workers who have disappeared from the economy.

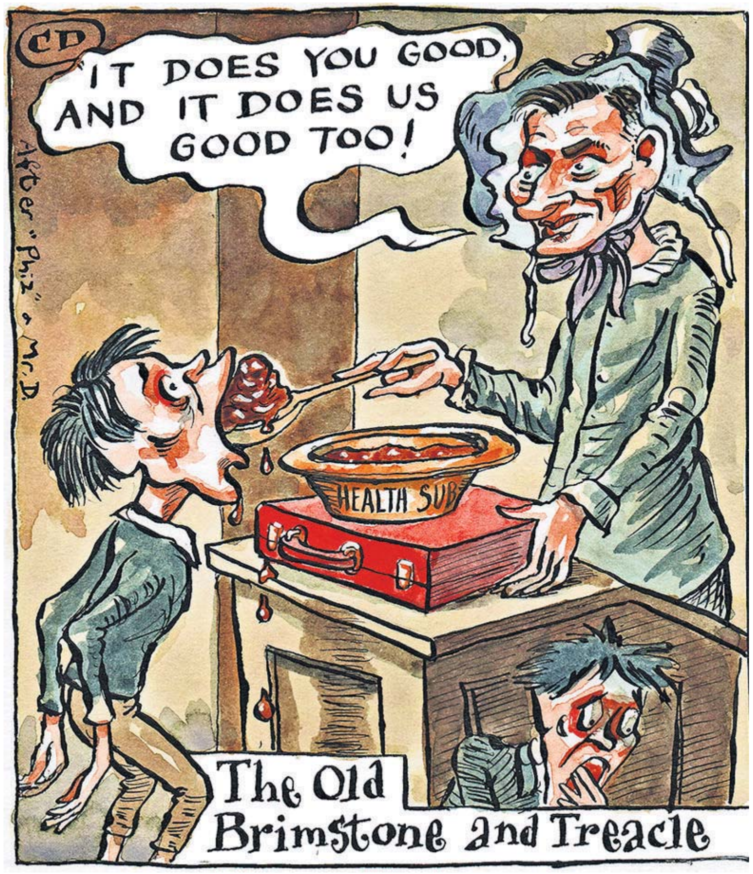
It is not all wealthy 50-year-old men who have taken early retirement and decided to play golf — Hunt's characterisation of grey slackers. As a 56-year-old he should know that most men this age are far more likely to be spending their pension pot on £4,000 carbon-fibre racing bikes and Rapha merino wool tops than a set of golf clubs.

Changes to the pension rules have been introduced to try to lure these pensioners off their bikes.

The trickier task is how to get the long-term sick back to work. The chancellor talked about expanding an occupational health subsidy for small businesses, encouraging more people to take the Department for Work and Pensions' "midlife MoT", and spending £400 million to improve workplace mental health and musculoskeletal resources.

This all sounds great. Who does not want more money spent on workplace wellbeing? If we want ill people to become well and productive, should we not spend money on fixing our bad backs, cricked necks, obese organs, anxious minds and stressed-out brains?

Except it is all a waste of money. Money spent on employees' wellbeing — the gyms, the in-house yoga, subsidised salads, the health check-ups and stress-reduction workshops — does not make a jot of difference. That is the surprising conclusion of Octavius Black, the co-founder of the MindGym consultancy. As his company was one of the first outfits to declare that unconscious bias training was a useless fad, I am prepared to hear him out.



He explained his theory in a lecture at a Wellbeing at Work conference, stuffed full of HR professionals, where he talked about two recent studies. The first was carried out by the University of Illinois. It introduced on campus a programme called iThrive, designed to replicate a typical corporate wellbeing scheme. In total 4,800 adults took part in the experiment, about half of them enjoying tons of benefits: health screening, medical check-ups and access to classes on weight management, t'ai chi, help with quitting smoking, financial wellness and healthy workplace habits. The other half did not receive any of these perks but gave permission for all their health and employment details to be accessed.

After two years the results were damning. First of all, the workers who took most advantage of the t'ai chi and gym classes were those who were the healthiest to start with. As Black said: "What we find is that in most of the wellness programmes there is a massive self-selection bias."

More crucially, the study showed that all the money and time thrown at iThrive had "no effects on medical spending, health behaviours or employee productivity after 30 months".

The second study was at an unnamed but very large US warehouse company and overseen by the Harvard Medical School. Again, it was a huge study involving 4,000 employees being enrolled in various workplace programmes, and 29,000 in a control group. The first group undertook health, exercise, nutrition and stress-reduction classes. The classes were voluntary but the participants were rewarded with gift cards. The second group went about their jobs as normal.

After 18 months, 80 aspects of the workers' health and wellbeing were studied. Two of those — self-reported levels of exercise and self-reported intent to lose weight — showed an improvement. In the other 78? Not a jot of difference. These included clinical diagnosis, rather than the participants self-reporting on a questionnaire. Blood pressure, sleep, mental wellbeing, money spent on healthcare, obesity levels: any fluctuations were exactly the same whether or not you participated in the programme. Levels of absenteeism, employee retention and productivity did not improve.

Does this mean that any money spent on preventative healthcare for workers is a waste?

Not necessarily, but both these substantial studies do suggest that any money spent should not be spent in the workplace and it should not be spent by employers.

As Black said: "Would I rather my company provided fresh fruit in the canteen and free medical insurance? Of course I would. But does it actually mean I will take more exercise or fall less ill? No."

It is worth pointing out that Black has a self-interested reason for haranguing HR directors about wasting their money: MindGym has an alternative form of office coaching that it believes produces better results.

The studies are compelling, though, and they suggest that a generation of policymakers and employers are mistaken in believing that the workplace is the best environment for various medical interventions. Much of our health and happiness rests not on an office t'ai chi studio or a stress-reduction workshop but on things an employer just cannot influence: our family, our friends, our love life, our history and genes.

The only thing that has consistently been proved to make workers feel happier and more productive, in office hours, is a sense of autonomy. That is why so many people have taken early retirement. Treat your employees as grown-ups, not as children told to eat their greens, and you might get a more productive workforce.

Harry Wallop is a consumer journalist and broadcaster. Follow him on Twitter @hwallop

FTX chief transferred $2bn to his own account

Helen Cahill

The founder of the collapsed cryptocurrency exchange FTX received more than $2 billion from the business's entities, according to court filings.

It has been revealed that Sam Bankman-Fried, 31, and other people linked to the company transferred more than $3 billion to their own accounts as payments and loans.

FTX was founded in 2019 and quickly became one of the biggest players in the cryptocurrency industry, with a valuation of $32 billion. But it filed for bankruptcy in November amid a wider rout in the sector as customers withdrew billions from their accounts.

Its demise came after the true state of FTX's finances were questioned by its rival, Binance, which backed away from a takeover deal for the company.

John Ray has been appointed as chief executive of FTX to manage its assets after it filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy.

Ray, known for his work in liquidating Enron, the fraudulent energy group that went bankrupt in 2001, has been trying to locate the cryptocurrency assets of FTX's customers, as well as other assets, for the benefit of creditors.

Bankman-Fried was arrested in the Bahamas in December and is facing federal charges. He is accused of securities fraud and stripping the business for his own benefit. He has pleaded not guilty.

The crypto exchange said the funding transfers did not include more than $240 million spent on luxury property in the Bahamas, political and charitable donations made directly by the FTX debtors, and substantial transfers to non-debtor units in the Bahamas and other jurisdictions.

A lawyer for Bankman-Fried declined to comment.

Court documents filed in November revealed Bankman-Fried received a $1 billion personal loan from FTX's hedge fund subsidiary Alameda Research. Bankman-Fried owned 90 per cent of the fund.

Alameda also made a $543 million loan to the FTX co-founder Nishad Singh and made a $55 million loan to a senior executive, Ryan Salame.

Bankman-Fried's former associate Caroline Ellison ran the hedge fund before its collapse and has since pleaded guilty to fraud charges.

FTX's collapse has caused embarrassment for the celebrities and politicians who became associated with the company.

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Inflation 'hurricane' rips hole in John Lewis figures

Isabella Fish Retail Editor

It has been another torrid year for the middle-class favourite John Lewis Partnership and yesterday the mutual, which is in the midst of a radical turnaround, laid bare the damage.

The employee-owned group, comprising John Lewis and Waitrose, confirmed that it would ditch its annual bonus for its 74,000 employees this year after it posted a larger loss than analysts had predicted. Losses before exceptional items and tax were £78 million for the year to January 28, down from a profit of £181 million a year earlier.

Dame Sharon White, the chairwoman, also warned of job cuts, saying that "inflation had hit us like a hurricane", with higher commodity prices, energy bills and staff wages adding £180 million in costs.

Total sales were down 2 per cent to £12.25 billion as its shoppers also "felt the pain of inflation".

Waitrose sales were down 3 per cent to £7.31 billion and John Lewis sales were up 0.2 per cent to £4.94 billion. White said its stores had attracted more customers, but they had spent less, and admitted that its shoppers had shifted some of their grocery spending to the discounters.

Naomi Simcock, executive director of John Lewis, who recently replaced Pippa Wicks, said the department store chain had witnessed strong demand for its value goods. Anyday, its cheaper fashion and home product range, took in more than £160 million in sales during the year.

White, 55, said the group was responding to its difficulties by tripling its target for cost savings to £900 million by January 2026. "The mantra for the year is cost out, margins up and customer focus."

The increased savings are likely to include an extra £236 million from further "simplification". Previous simplification efforts included changes to its head office, which resulted in 1,500 jobs being cut by 2021.

The partnership insisted the balance sheet remained strong, with £1 billion of cash on hand, but there is no doubt there are concerns about the future of the business.

The figures were published a day after the partnership appointed the former Hovis boss Nish Kankiwala as its first group chief executive. Kankiwala, 65, had been a non-executive director at the partnership since April 2021 and provided counsel on its transformation plan. The retailer did not search externally to recruit, which has raised some concerns about governance.

Analysts have questioned Kankiwala's retail credentials. Although he has enjoyed a glittering career at Burger King, Pepsi and Hovis, he has no direct experience at leading retailers such as John Lewis. This could be a fatal move as it battles to bring its discontented customers back on board.

Julie Palmer, of Begbies Traynor, the corporate restructuring firm, said: "All in all, it looks like a business which once stood apart from the competition thanks to its unusual structure is being forced by tough market conditions to become more and more similar to rivals it once looked down on."



Revenue not knowingly transformed



DFS lowers expectations while customers sit tight

Isabella Fish

DFS Furniture has downgraded its profit forecast as customers scale back on buying expensive discretionary items such as beds and armchairs.

The sofa and soft furnishings retailer said it expected to make between £30 million and £35 million in pre-tax profit before brand amortisation. The company said this was still in line with what analysts were expecting but at the lower end of the £30 million to £40 million range it previously had forecast.

Tim Stacey, chief executive, said: "It is only a narrowing of the range but we've still got to recognise that the overall market is down and challenged. There are fewer customers more generally as consumer confidence is relatively low because of the high cost of living."

The business reported a 2.2 per cent drop in revenue to £545 million from continuing operations in the six months to December 25. Pre-tax profit dipped by more than two thirds to £6.8 million, while net debt rose from £46 million to £136 million.

Stacey said the business's margins had started to improve as "freight rates from China are now back down to pre-pandemic levels … that was a cost drag last year, but it's now reversing".

He said orders since the beginning of the year had been "strong, up on pre-pandemic levels".

Customers had been buying tech-based products, he said, such as recliners with heated seats, built-in music and memory settings, in which the company had "taken inspiration from the car industry". For this calendar year Stacey was not anticipating "a big market recovery", but said DFS was well placed as a furniture business.

Shares in DFS, which have dropped by 37 per cent in the past year, were unchanged at 133p.

PAUL HAMPARTSOUMIAN/REX/SHUTTERSTOCK





Dame Sharon White, the John Lewis chairwoman, insists her efficiency drive will convert a higher slice of revenue into profit

The boss of the John Lewis Partnership has insisted the company's five-year transformation plan, aimed at reaching annual profits of £400 million by 2025, is "on track" despite falling back into the red (Isabella Fish writes).

A "huge focus" for the next two years is "supercharging" the business's efficiency programme – otherwise known as "lean, simple, fast" – to convert more of its sales into profit, Dame Sharon White, its chairwoman, said.

The company's new chief executive, Nish Kankiwala, will "provide some balance in terms of that pace and that execution", she added.

The partnership plan was introduced by White in October 2020 amid falling sales at the department stores-to-supermarkets group.

The strategy includes reducing staff, shutting stores and streamlining operations. The business also has plans to expand its financial, home and personal styling services.

The transformation plan is halfway through and, despite recent setbacks, its finance director, Bérangère Michel, said the partnership was still on a "clear path to a £400 million profit".

Analysts are not convinced. Josh Holmes, a senior consultant at Retail Economics, said: "Bringing in a new chief executive is the latest admission that the turnaround plan is not on track."

He said that prioritising profitability and shoring up balance sheets was understandable, "but the retailer must ensure that it doesn't lose sight of what made them great in the first place — quality, customer service, and an aspirational brand image. Putting cost-cutting at the forefront of the company agenda could undermine these values."

British American Tobacco urged to follow exodus from City to US

Alex Ralph

A top five shareholder in British American Tobacco has called for the cigarette group to move its primary listing to New York.

Rajiv Jain, founder of the $92 billion US-based investment firm GQG Partners, has urged bosses at the FTSE 100-listed owner of Lucky Strike and Dunhill cigarettes to shift its listing, which dates to 1912, from London.

Jain told the Financial Times that the core ownership base of BAT had disappeared, the company's business was centred in the US and there was a gap in valuation with the tobacco giant Philip Morris International (PMI), which is listed in the US, and in which GQG is a top ten shareholder.

Increasing numbers of companies are considering the merits of New York over London because of the lure of potentially higher valuations and a deeper capital base.

The Cambridge-based chip designer Arm, one of Britain's leading tech companies, revealed this month that it had decided to float in the US instead of Britain. The FTSE 100 building materials supplier CRH has said that it will switch its primary listing to New York, and Flutter, the gambling business behind Betfair and Paddy Power, is exploring a similar move.

BAT has shares listed on the London Stock Exchange and a secondary listing on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange. A spokesman for the company said: "BAT does not comment on its engagement with shareholders."

Shares in BAT rose 8½p, or 0.3 per cent, to £29.68½ in London, valuing the company at £66.5 billion.

BAT, founded in 1902, is based in London and employs about 50,000 people. The US is its largest market, accounting for two fifths of the group's £27.6 billion global revenues last year.

Jonathan Fell, an independent industry analyst, said: "I think if you were listing it now you would choose the US, because of where it makes the bulk of its profits, but it's less clear to me that moving the listing now would magically improve its rating. BAT already has plenty of big US investors and I think the valuation gap with PMI is more about perceived differences in strategic credibility and progress with business transformation than anything else."

Rae Maile, the veteran tobacco analyst at Panmure Gordon, said: "The evidence of redomiciling a listing to get a better rating is mixed. Amvescap became Invesco and relisted in the US and the rating did nothing. Similarly Henderson on becoming Janus Henderson. Arguably in each case the root cause of the poor rating was not where they were listed but the story that they had to tell. The risk for BAT being listed in the same location as Philip Morris International is that its story will look distinctly second rate."

BAT's other top shareholders include Kenneth Dart, a billionaire heir to an American foam cups fortune, through Spring Mountain Investments, which holds 8.9 per cent, according to Refinitiv data. Capital Group and BlackRock are also top five shareholders.

The tobacco sector has been out of favour with many investors and the industry remains under pressure from stricter regulation, greater health awareness and the increasing importance of environmental, social and corporate governance investment.

Last year Scottish Widows became the latest investor to shun cigarette companies and Axa, BNP Paribas, ING and Société Générale are among the signatories to the Tobacco-Free Finance Pledge, a UN-supported initiative led by the TobaccoFree Portfolios pressure group. Other investors, such as Legal & General and Columbia Threadneedle, are among firms with funds excluding tobacco.

Deliveroo 'on road to profit' despite loss

Tom Howard

Deliveroo fell to a loss of almost £300 million last year but is adamant that it is making "excellent progress on [its] path to profitability".

Customers around the world placed 299.2 million orders for takeaways and groceries on its platform last year, an increase of 5 per cent on 2021.

The higher order numbers, coupled with a rise in the average value, meant that gross transaction value, the total amount customers spent via Deliveroo, rose by 9 per cent to £6.85 billion.

From that the company generated revenue, predominantly delivery fees and its cut of the orders, of £1.97 billion. That was 14 per cent higher than the £1.74 billion it turned over in 2021.

Gross profit was £643.2 million, an improvement on the £495.1 million in the previous year, but after deducting costs Deliveroo posted a loss for the year of £294.1 million, better than the £330.5 million it racked up in 2021.

The company burnt through a quarter of its cash pile, which ended the year at just below £1 billion, having started 2022 at close to £1.3 billion.



The amount Deliveroo customers spent grew by 9 per cent last year

Will Shu, chief executive, said he was "proud of our performance in the past 12 months". He added that reaching adjusted underlying profitability in the second half of last year was a "major achievement", and one that came 18 months ahead of schedule.

After stripping out a number of costs and one-offs, Deliveroo turned a £6.6 million profit in the final six months of 2022, compared with an underlying loss of £84.6 million in the same period of 2021.

Deliveroo, which has headquarters in London, is one of the biggest takeaway ordering apps, competing with the likes of Uber Eats and Just Eat. It was founded ten years ago by Shu, a former investment banker, and Greg Orlowski, a software engineer.

The company has 150,000 riders delivering from 176,000 restaurants and shops in ten countries. About 7.4 million customers use its app each month.

Shares were floated at 390p in April 2021 but have been a target for short-sellers and City sceptics ever since. The stock fell ¾p, or 0.8 per cent, to 88¾p.

The market was unsettled by Deliveroo's prediction that its gross transaction value would rise by only "low to mid-single digits" this year, versus 9 per cent last year. Shu, 43, acknowledged that the "macroeconomic outlook for the year ahead remains uncertain".

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Power supplier fined £2.1m for overcharging customers

Emily Gosden Energy Editor

A business energy supplier has been fined £2.1 million after deliberately overcharging its customers to enable it to survive a funding shortfall.

United Gas & Power, which has 2,700 customers, overcharged by an average of more than £2,000, with a highest figure of more than £22,000.

Ofgem, the regulator, found that in February 2020, "despite having actual consumption data available, UGP billed some customers on inflated consumption estimates, generating extra revenue for itself to remedy a shortfall in its budget". Some customers waited seven months for a refund, only receiving it after Ofgem began investigating in July 2020.

The watchdog found that the company had committed nine breaches of its licence conditions over five years and imposed a penalty of £2.1 million.

United, founded in 2013 and based in Leeds, reported sales of £32.4 million and a pre-tax profit of £33,831 in the year to June 2021, the most recent year for which accounts are available.

It claims on its website that "quality customer care is not a department, it's an attitude".

Cathryn Scott, director of enforcement at Ofgem, said: "No matter what financial difficulties companies may find themselves in, it is plainly unjustifiable and wholly unacceptable to deliberately overcharge customers to boost revenue."

United said: "We accept responsibility for the breaches identified and apologise to our customers for any inconvenience or concern caused."

The company said it had "implemented several measures to improve our services" including replacing its ageing billing system and updating its compliance training.

Royal Mail boss handed explosive

Alex Ralph
Chief Business Correspondent

Almost a year since Royal Mail became embroiled in a bitter industrial dispute, talks with union bosses are showing the first signs of a possible breakthrough.

Negotiations to end the protracted pay and conditions row with the Communication Workers Union have continued this week under a new process orchestrated by Sir Brendan Barber, a former general secretary of the TUC and ex-chairman of the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (Acas). Progress has been made "in some areas".

However, any hopes that Royal Mail is close to moving on from the saga have been scuppered by a damning report from MPs on the business, energy and industrial strategy committee, which threatens to deepen the woes of the beleaguered postal group.

The cross-party committee has referred Royal Mail to Ofcom, the regulator, for allegedly breaching its universal service obligation to deliver letters to businesses and homes six days a week, and has accused Simon Thompson, Royal Mail's chief executive, of not giving "wholly accurate" answers to MPs when he appeared before them this year. Royal Mail denies misleading the committee.

Today's 23-page report by the committee, which is chaired by the 36-year-old Labour MP Darren Jones, stems from two fractious hearings it held with Thompson, the first in January and a second, a rare recall, last month.

After the hearing on January 17, where Thompson was accused of playing "fast and loose" with questions, the committee received more than 1,000 emails, the vast majority from postal workers, "casting doubt" on some of Thompson's statements.

The deluge prompted the committee to recall Thompson, 56, and to invite Keith Williams, 66, the group's chairman, to seek clarification on the use of handheld devices, known as postal digital assistants (PDAs), and the prioritisation of parcels over letters.

The turmoil has been damaging for Royal Mail, which is struggling to focus on its more profitable parcels business and to modernise. It has increased uncertainty about its future ownership as the prospect of a break-up of the group hits its balance sheet and share price.

In January, International Distributions Services, the renamed parent company, revealed operating losses at Royal Mail, its British business, of £295 million for the first nine months of its financial year after 18 days of industrial action, including some taken over the peak Christmas period.

The committee's report centres on two accusations: that Royal Mail "systemically" failed to deliver on its legal service obligation and that digital handheld devices are being used to track and discipline workers.

POSTAL DIGITAL ASSISTANTS

The handheld devices were introduced in 2007 for postal staff to scan barcodes and take customer signatures, and since 2017 to generate data on individual delivery routes, including start and end times, the distance covered and the time taken.

In his evidence in January, Thompson was asked whether postal workers were "hauled into the office and asked for explanations" if the data showed a delay in delivering post. He had told MPs: "That is not my understanding. That is not something I am aware of."

However, the emails subsequently sent to MPs by postal staff claimed the data was "assessed for the purpose of individual performance management". Some of the correspondence was shown during last month's recall hearing. In one delivery office, according to the committee, data had been displayed with the phrase "Don't get caught" and in another printout maps from individual rounds showing stopping times were reproduced.

"We received many accounts from postal workers of having been questioned by managers about stopping times, based on PDA data," the committee says in its report.

In a letter sent by Thompson to the committee, shortly before his February 22 appearance, he acknowledged that "in exceptional circumstances" and by agreement with the union the data could be used as supporting evidence in



Royal Mail admits that digital devices



Gatwick takes off after post-pandemic recovery

Alex Ralph

Gatwick airport has returned to profit for the first time since the pandemic amid a recovery in air travel, but cautioned that it has "some way to go to reach a full recovery".

Britain's second largest airport, which is majority-owned by Vinci Airports, the France-based company, reported a profit of £196.5 million for last year, against total losses of more than £830 million for 2020 and 2021.

It generated revenue of £776.6 million, including retail income of £159 million and car parking income of £102 million.

Gatwick, where more than 40 airlines fly to about 150 short-haul and 45 long-haul destinations, said it was used by 32.8 million passengers, with demand at 70.4 per cent of pre-pandemic levels.

Short-haul was at 92 per cent of flights flown before the pandemic, while long-haul and business travel is taking longer to recover. Gatwick said it remains "cautiously optimistic about a full recovery, given the current economic uncertainty and inflationary pressures".

It expects to have more than 40.5 million passengers this year, lifted by a "very busy" peak season.

The aviation industry was engulfed in turmoil last year when the sudden surge in demand as it opened up after the Covid lockdowns led to cancellations and delays.

A shortage of airline crew because of delays in re-recruiting staff after thousands of job cuts early in the pandemic contributed to the problems.

Last June, Gatwick announced that it was capping the number of flights it handled over the summer.

Stewart Wingate, the airport's chief executive, said yesterday: "The decisive actions we took early last year allowed us to offer good levels of service to passengers who travelled through Gatwick."

package by MPs' inquiry

SALLY ANDERSON/ALAMY



issued to staff are used to track their movements and stopping times, but says this is only in "exceptional circumstances"

conduct cases, but this had to be signed off by HR. Thompson said there was "nothing that I can see that would say that this is being used to performance manage".

The committee's report concludes that "it is clear to us that PDA data has been used to track the speed at which postal workers deliver their post and, subsequently, for performance management, both explicitly in disciplinary cases and as a tool by local managers to dissuade staff from stopping during their rounds".

It adds: "Based on the evidence, it seems clear to us that, whether intentionally or inadvertently, Thompson misled the committee when he first gave evidence by giving an answer which was not wholly accurate."

The committee adds: "If Mr Thompson's assertion is correct — namely, that there are errors in applying company policy at Royal Mail — then these would appear to be widespread, and we can only conclude that the level of management oversight at Royal Mail is negligent and warrants a formal review by the board."

Given the discrepancies, the committee has asked the information commissioner to review the "legal basis for the collection, storage and use of this data" and to report back to MPs by the end of the year.

UNIVERSAL SERVICE OBLIGATION

The Postal Services Act 2011, introduced before Royal Mail was privatised in 2013, ensures a six-day-a-week service for the delivery and collection of letters and five days a week for parcels.

Amid the diverging fortunes of its parcels and letters business, the company has been lobbying the government to reduce to five days its legal obligation to deliver letters. The Times reported in November a letter sent by Thompson in May to Kwasi Kwarteng, who was then business secretary, asking for an end to its commitment to deliver on Saturdays. Despite a rejection, Royal Mail went public in November with its demands because of the change at the top of government. It customers were relaxed about its proposals.

Following reports that Royal Mail employees had been told to prioritise parcels over letters, on the basis that parcels were more profitable, the committee asked Thompson during January's hearing whether these were accurate. He told MPs "we have been very clear that there is no difference between the two".

The committee subsequently received a "multitude of emails" and photographs, as well as audio and video recordings of postal workers being instructed by delivery office managers to "deprioritise letter deliveries even though it was acknowledged that Royal Mail was failing to meet its USO".

At the February hearing, Thompson said "what we see here is what happens on days of industrial action, where we have to take a different policy". However, the committee's report concludes it was "not convinced … that the policy was confined to periods of industrial action".

It decided that "Royal Mail has deprioritised delivery of letters as a matter of company policy. While this might have been a legitimate approach at times during the pandemic, to handle exceptional volumes of parcels in order to ensure safe access through delivery offices, we do not believe it is justifiable over the long term."

Rentokil flies higher after climate boost for insects

Simon Freeman

Climate change, the return of office working and urbanisation are good news for pests, and so too for Rentokil Initial.

Shares in the pest control-to-hygiene company, which has its headquarters in Crawley, rallied by 10 per cent to the top of the FTSE 100 when it raised its revenue guidance and dividend.

Andy Ransom, chief executive, said: "The increasing warming of the planet means the breeding season of insects is shortened so we're getting more insects, particularly in the hotter, more humid parts of the world."

The company, which has 59,000 staff in 91 countries, said demand for pest control services in the United States and elsewhere was growing as office workers returned. Larger middle classes in emerging markets in Asia and Africa are adding to demand.

Pre-tax profit last year rose by 27.7 per cent to £532 million, almost £50 million over the consensus, driven by a 25.6 per cent lift in revenue to £3.7 billion. The company raised medium-term guidance for organic revenue growth to "at least 5 per cent". The dividend per share was raised 18.2 per cent to 7.55p.

Ransom said progress on integration after acquiring its US rival Terminix, a $6.7 billion deal that completed last October, had been "excellent". It plans to save about $200 million by cutting branches in the US to 400 from 600.

About 90 per cent of Rentokil's revenues are from outside the UK. While 70 per cent of its business is clearing homes and offices of undesirable critters, a quarter comes from the hygiene brand Initial, whose sanitiser sales boomed during the pandemic.

Charlie Huggins, head of equities at Wealth Club, said: "Rentokil ought to be better placed than most to weather an economic downturn. Rats need dealing with, no matter what's happening to the economy."

Shares in Rentokil Initial, which surpassed 630p in the pandemic, closed up 50½p, or 10.1 per cent, at 553½p.

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Hurricane Energy surges on Prax deal

Greig Cameron

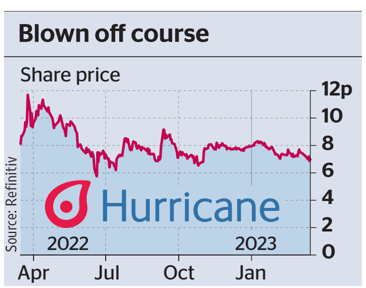
A former stock market darling that nearly collapsed is being taken over in a deal valuing it at up to £249 million.

The board of Hurricane Energy, a North Sea oil company, is recommending the approach by Prax, a London-based group with interests in refining, storage and trading, which could be worth 12.5p per share. The Aim-quoted company has been for sale since November.

A deal with Prax would mark a remarkable turnaround in fortunes. In 2021 the energy group tried to obtain support for a restructuring plan because it lacked the cash to repay $230 million of bonds due the following summer. It warned that operations would cease in June 2022 if shareholders did not support the move.

However, the plan was rejected after a court hearing and the subsequent sharp rise in oil prices meant Hurricane was able to repay the bonds in full.

Hurricane became the first oil company to develop a fractured basement field in the UK North Sea, using rock formations that tend to lie below where oil has been found previously.



It was valued at more than £1 billion in 2017, with its shares topping 58p. Its assets to the west of Shetland were estimated to be among the largest undeveloped oil discoveries in UK waters.

The Lancaster field became the first UK fractured basement type to go into production in March 2019 but has underperformed, leading to write-downs in the size of Hurricane's reserves.

Prax is involved in the refining, marketing and distribution of fuels and sees the acquisition of Hurricane as a first step in building a production business.

It runs petrol stations around the UK and owns the Lindsey oil refinery. Prax had revenue of $10 billion and underlying profit of about $100 million in the 12 months to February 2022.

Sanjeev and Arani Soosaipillai are the private couple behind a group that employs almost 1,300 people.

Hurricane shareholders are guaranteed £82.6 million, worth about 4.15p per share, but the rest of the value involves performance milestones being hit. Crystal Amber and Kerogen are supporting the deal, which means that almost 45 per cent of Hurricane's shareholders back the takeover.

If the full value is met then shareholders can expect an 84 per cent premium to Hurricane's share price of 6.8p on November 1 before it started a formal sale process. The lower end, worth £82.7 million, is a 39 per cent discount to the same price.

Ashley Kelty, from Panmure Gordon, described the deal's structure as "horribly convoluted" but said it "looks like good value for investors".

The shares closed up ¼p, or 1 per cent, at 7p.

Food and wine for clients eat into profits at Savills

Tom Howard

Profits at Savills fell by almost a fifth last year, not because of chaos in the property market but because its army of agents started to wine and dine clients again after the pandemic.

The group's revenues had "held up pretty well", Mark Ridley, chief executive, said, especially given the "crippling" end to the year when residential and commercial property markets had ground to a halt amid spiralling interest rates and economic uncertainty.

Savills turned over £2.3 billion last year, a 7 per cent increase on the record £2.15 billion it had posted in 2021. Ridley said the business had improved the top line by increasing its market share, especially in leasing in Europe and the Middle East.

Profits fell by 16 per cent to £153.9 million from a record £183.1 million in 2021. On an underlying basis, Savills' preferred metric, profits fell by 18 per cent to £164.6 million.

Simon Shaw, chief financial officer, said that "2021 was abnormally profitable. A lot of discretionary costs were simply not incurred; you couldn't travel or entertain clients or go to marketing events."

Savills had suggested last year that those costs would return as the world reopened, although it was spending 20 per cent less on such items than before the pandemic. "We've all become more sustainability focused and therefore we're doing less travelling," Shaw said.

Savills is thought of by many people as a traditional residential estate agent, but that makes up only a tenth of its business. Its agents broker sales of warehouses, find tenants for offices and look after blocks of flats.

Just over half of its revenues come from its "less transactional" divisions such as investment management, property management and its consultancy business. Savills shares fell 31p, or 3.1 per cent, to 967p, valuing the business at £1.4 billion.

Business Markets



Emma Powell **Tempus**

Buy, sell or hold: today's best share tips

Potholes put a brake on expectations

DELIVEROO

Market cap	Annual pre-tax loss
£1.58bn	£231m

Like many of the cash-guzzling, high-shooting companies of its ilk, Deliveroo's promise of profitability is laden with caveats.

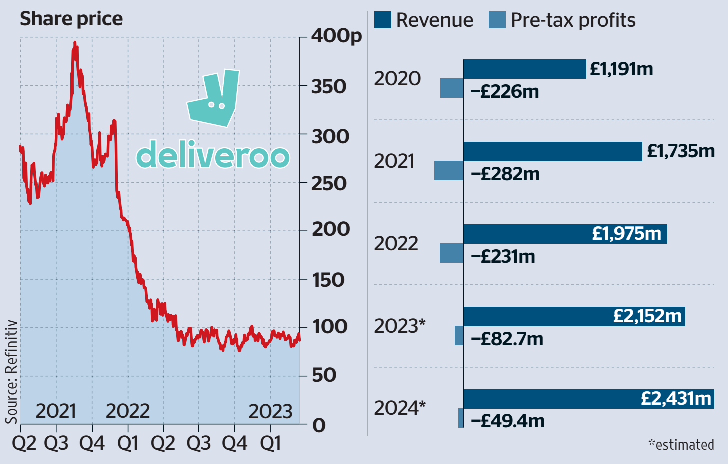
The food delivery app hit break even in the second half of last year, a year ahead of previous guidance. However, that is only if you strip out a heap of charges that include finance costs and exceptional items, the latter of which amounts to legal, regulatory and restructuring expenses. On a statutory basis, the group recorded a £231 million pre-tax loss and chomped its way through £342 million in cash, just over a quarter of the total net liquidity on its balance sheet.

Still, it reckons that it can hit adjusted earnings before interest, taxes and all those other items of between £20 million and £50 million this year, against a loss of £45 million last year.

If the food app can turn out earnings at the top end of that range, it could even flick to a positive free cashflow position, Will Shu, the group's boss and co-founder, reckons. That would be a remarkable turnaround from the £243 million in free cash sapped in the most recent 12 months.

However, achieving even against a sympathetic profit measure will be a stretch. Shu reckons the gross value of transactions put through the app

Failing to deliver



ADVICE Avoid
WHY Weaker consumer spending could see the group miss earnings guidance this year

will grow by low-to-mid single digits this year, a haircut on the 9 per cent recorded last year, to account for cost-of-living pressures and a post-Covid comedown. That includes transaction values being flat over the first quarter against the lingering impact of the Omicron variant at the same time last year.

That looks optimistic compared with takeaway volumes across the rest of the industry. Food delivery sales volumes from British restaurants were 13.3 per cent lower in February compared with last year, according to CGA, a hospitality research specialist. Not even lofty rates of price inflation could offset the demand decline.

True, higher prices helped to offset a 2 per cent fall in the number of orders Deliveroo took over the fourth quarter. The average takeaway value was 11 per cent higher. Repeating that this year is hardly something to bank on. As Shu concedes, inflation is bad for business.

For Deliveroo, which generates revenue primarily from restaurant and grocer commissions and from consumer fees, part of the plan to raise its transaction value over the long term is to take a greater share of the food delivery market, improve its grocery delivery income and increase coverage within markets that it reckons can sustain more drivers.

Investors have not put much store in Deliveroo's growth plans. Those who bought into 2021's disastrous IPO will be sitting on a loss of 77 per cent. The group is valued at a touch under 0.3 times forecast sales for this year, far below a peak multiple of 3.4 in August 2021. Such caution is warranted.

Even putting the cost of living pressures aside, more potential stumbling blocks lie ahead. Let's not forget various legal wranglings, including over the status of its riders in some international markets. The provision taken against legal disputes had risen from £81.7 million at the end of 2021 to £129.3 million at the end of December. Costs incurred for legal and regulatory problems came in at £62.6 million, up from £10.8 million the year before.

Branching out internationally, from a more saturated UK market is necessary if Deliveroo is to achieve the growth promised. It is now taking a tilt at the Middle East, launching in Kuwait and Qatar last year. Who knows how long it will stick around. The plug was pulled on Australia and the Netherlands last year. Monthly average customer numbers outside the UK and Ireland declined during the fourth quarter. Pulling out of countries is not without costs.

A lowly share price is a better reflection of the reality for Deliveroo's prospects.

RENTOKIL INITIAL

Market cap	Annual revenue
£14bn	£3.7bn

Even by the standards of Rentokil Initial, a group built on hoovering up smaller rivals, the Terminix deal caused some jitters for investors. A boost to the savings and top-line growth set to be squeezed from the $6.7 billion takeover of the US rival should be enough to restore faith.

The FTSE 100 group reckons it will extract $200 million from its cost base thanks to the deal, against previous guidance of at least $150 million. Much of that has come from the back office, including better procurement that comes with greater scale. Consolidating its 600 branches in the US to 400, each producing at least double the revenue of the previously more bloated footprint, has added to the savings.

Having more clout does not just help on the cost side; the pest control giant reckons it can churn out at least 5 per cent revenue growth even without acquisitions over the medium term. Passing through the impact of cost inflation to prices, together with more profitable Terminix business, is expected to boost the margin to 19 per cent by 2025, from 15.4 per cent last year.

Last year's organic revenue growth of 6.6 per cent was not all inflation, either; a third came from higher sales volumes. Strip out the lingering trail-off in disinfectant business, which boomed during the pandemic, and organic revenue was just over 9 per cent higher. That should help boost growth rates this year.

Debt may be one area that makes some investors uneasy. At £3.3 billion, net debt equated to 3.2 times adjusted earnings before tax and other charges. By the end of next year, management reckons it will have cut that leverage multiple to below three. That looks like a credible ambition. All but one of its five markets recorded double-digit adjusted profit growth last year and it has scope to pay down the absolute level of debt. Free cashflow amounted to £374 million, even after spending more than £250 million on smaller bolt-on deals.

ADVICE Buy
WHY There is solid earnings growth on offer

NEWS IN BRIEF

Women on the rise

After two years of no progress, financial services companies have increased the proportion of women in senior management to 35 per cent, a review of a Treasury-backed initiative has found. For the first time since the voluntary Women in Finance charter was created in 2016, the best-performing firms, including Virgin Money and PensionBee, had women in more than 40 per cent of top management jobs. Twenty-nine companies missed their targets, including KPMG, Nomura International and Grant Thornton.

Mineral company sold

Norway's Loke Marine Minerals has bought UK Seabed Resources, a deep-sea mining company, from Lockheed Martin for an undisclosed sum. The firm, which was a wholly owned subsidiary of Lockheed Martin UK in partnership with the British government, owns two deep sea mineral licences in the Pacific and a stake in a Singapore mineral company. The deal makes Loke the biggest licence holder in an area of 4.5 million sq km between Hawaii and Mexico.

Digital-only publisher

The owner of The Yorkshire Post and The Scotsman has said it wants to become a "digital-only" publisher, but still produce newspapers tailored to their local areas. David Montgomery, executive chairman of National World, said its operations were changing to keep up with the shifting landscape. He said: "National World is taking the leap to being a digital-only company." Digital revenue at the company rose by more than a quarter to £16 million last year.

Lynch ruling awaited

Mike Lynch is waiting for a ruling on his appeal against extradition to the US to face fraud charges. Lord Justice Lewis and Mr Justice Julian Knowles finished hearing evidence and indicated that they would deliver a ruling soon. Priti Patel, who was then the home secretary, approved Lynch's extradition in 2022 after he lost a fraud case at the High Court relating to the $11.1 billion sale of his software company, Autonomy, to Hewlett Packard in 2012. Lynch denied the charges.

PRICES

Major indices

New York	
Dow Jones	32246.55 (+371.98)
Nasdaq Composite	11717.28 (+283.23)
S&P 500	3960.28 (+68.35)
Tokyo	
Nikkei 225	27010.61 (-218.87)
Hong Kong	
Hang Seng	19203.91 (-335.96)
Amsterdam	
AEX Index	727.06 (+10.59)
Sydney	
AO	7152.70 (-110.40)
Frankfurt	
DAX	14967.10 (+231.84)
Singapore	
Straits	3155.54 (-17.38)
Brussels	
BEL20	3652.55 (+22.64)
Paris	
CAC-40	7025.72 (+140.01)

Zurich	
SMI Index	10719.10 (+202.70)
DJ Euro Stoxx 50	4116.98 (+82.06)
London	
FTSE 100	7410.03 (+65.58)
FTSE 250	18758.58 (+132.73)
FTSE 350	4091.16 (+35.18)
FTSE Eurotop 100	3439.78 (+40.89)
FTSE All-Shares	4051.38 (+34.38)
FTSE Non Financials	4939.76 (+34.33)
techMARK 100	6507.41 (+54.13)
Bargains	n/a
US$	1.2115 (+0.0047)
Euro	1.1422 (+0.0020)
£:SDR	0.98 (+0.00)
Exchange Index	78.27 (+0.01)
Bank of England official close (4pm)	
CPI	126.45 Jan (2015 = 100)
RPI	360.30 Jan (Jan 1987 = 100)
RPIX	290.10 Jun (Jan 1987 = 100)
Morningstar Long Commodity	677.16 (+5.72)
Morningstar Long/Short Commod	4703.45 (+27.75)

London Financial Futures

	Period	Open	High	Low	Sett	Vol	Open Int
Long Gilt	Mar 23	105.38	105.40	105.37	105.67	115	5159
	Jun 23	104.17	106.18	104.12	105.08	256245	398962
3-Mth Sterling	Jun 23						
	Sep 23						
	Dec 23						
	Mar 24						
	Jun 24						
3-Mth Euribor	Jun 23	96.730	96.995	96.640	96.740	372919	551462
	Sep 23	96.640	96.880	96.500	96.665	304994	550285
	Dec 23	96.655	96.940	96.555	96.725	271352	357859
	Mar 24	96.695	97.005	96.620	96.795	178943	373023
	Jun 24	96.710	97.030	96.640	96.845	258654	333938
3-Mth Euroswiss	Jun 23						
	Sep 23						
	Dec 23						
	Mar 24						
FTSE100	Mar 23	7424.0	7457.5	7329.0	7408.5	147847	137351
	Jun 23	7416.5	7451.0	7323.5	7403.5	164454	565824
FTSEurofirst 80	Mar 23				5492.5		
	Jun 23				5488.0		

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Commodities

ICIS pricing (London 7.30pm)

Crude Oils ($/barrel FOB)

Brent Physical	73.89	+0.79
BFOE(May)	74.79	+1.01
BFOE(Jun)	74.36	+1.01
WTI(May)	68.52	+0.78
WTI(Jun)	68.63	+0.81

Products ($/MT)

Spot CIF NW Europe (prompt delivery)

Premium Unld	808.00	811.00	+15.00
Gasoil EEC	736.25	737.25	+16.50
3.5 Fuel Oil	345.00	349.00	+6.00
Naphtha	618.00	620.00	+16.00

ICE Futures

Gas Oil

Apr	759.75-759.25	Jul	714.75-713.50
May	736.50-736.25	Aug	712.50-710.25
Jun	720.75-720.50		Volume: 697448

Brent (9.00pm)

May	73.60-75.02	Aug	76.00-74.05
Jun	74.61-74.59	Sep	73.87-73.80
Jul	74.39-74.36		Volume: 2100154

LIFFE

Cocoa

Mar	2057-1960	May	1923-1910
May	2065-2072	Jul	1917-1891
Jul	2060-2049	Sep	1901-1900
Sep	2055-2019		
Dec	1998-1986		
Mar	1941-1938		Volume: 85833

RobustaCoffee

Mar	2105-2058	Nov	2084-2010
May	2103-2101	Jan	2033-1941
Jul	2098-2089		
Sep	2078-2061		Volume: 18424

White Sugar (FOB)

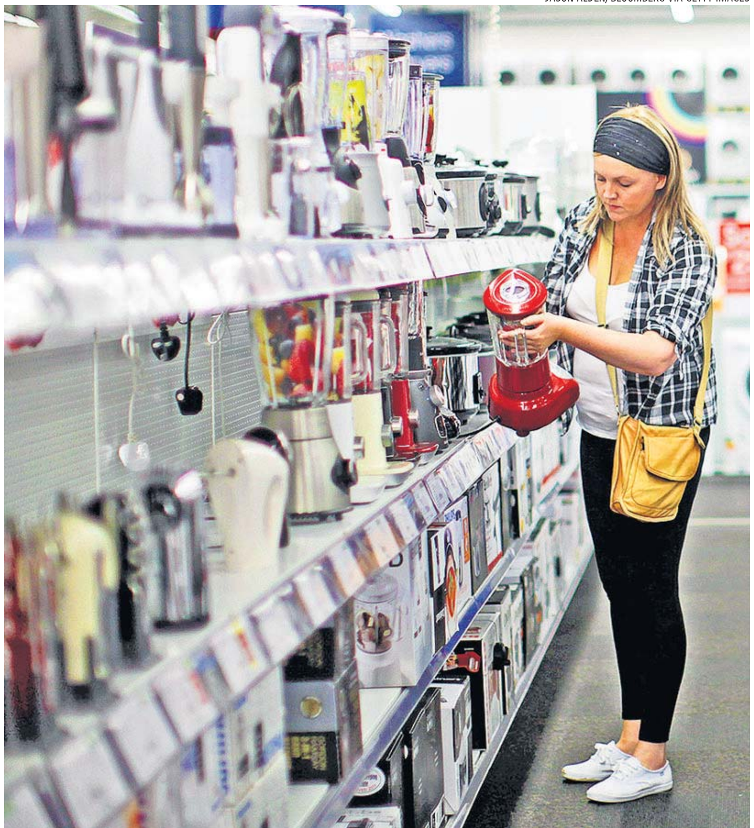
Reuters		Dec	546.50-544.10
		Mar	539.20-535.90
May	586.20-585.40	May	532.40-520.00
Aug	572.50-570.50	Aug	525.00-514.60
Oct	557.60-556.00		Volume: 66475

London Grain Futures

LIFFE Wheat (close £/t)

Mar	236.00	May	212.75	Jul	unq
Nov	217.00	Jan	unq	Volume: 770	

JASON ALDEN/BLOOMBERG VIA GETTY IMAGES



Currys hit hard by Nordic woes

Investors in Currys took fright yesterday when the electronics retail chain cut its profit guidance for the second time in just over three months, as trading woes in Scandinavia continue.

The company has hired a new chief executive for the Nordics business as part of its effort to overhaul the division, where it admitted performance remained "very challenging".

It said the Nordics' troubles were offsetting "strengthening" trading in the UK and Ireland and would leave profits sharply lower. Underlying pre-tax profits were expected to be about £104 million, in line with recent cuts to the consensus in the market but at the lower end of previous guidance.

Shares in the retailer closed down 6¾p, or 9.3 per cent, at 65p.

Currys was created through the £3.7 billion merger of Dixons Retail and Carphone Warehouse in 2014. It has about 830 shops in eight countries and 35,000 employees.

Currys downgraded its outlook in December to between £100 million and £125 million for the year to this April, from a previous £125 million to £145 million. It made £186 million in pre-tax profits for 2021-22. The company said it would end the year with debts of up to £150 million.

Erik Sonsterud has been replaced as head of Nordics by Fredrik Tonnesen, the chief operating officer.

Alex Baldock, Curry's chief executive, said: "Our Nordics performance is not where we want or expect it to be. We now need to go further and faster to improve."

The day's biggest movers

Company	Change
Rentokil Initial Positive annual results	10.1%
OSB Group Forecast-beating annual profits	9.4%
Abrdn Recovers some losses after recent sell-off	5.6%
Bridgepoint Group Annual profits rise	5.0%
Lloyds Banking Group Swept up in banking share rally	3.2%
Savills Flags challenging first half	-3.1%
Crest Nicholson Trades ex-dividend	-3.8%
National Express Bus drivers to strike	-6.3%
M&G Trades ex-dividend	-8.4%
Currys Fears over Nordic business	-9.3%

Buy-to-let lender's warm welcome for shareholders



Jessica Newman ***Market report***

Like many banks across the globe it has been a torrid week for OSB Group, but the buy-to-let lender's fortunes improved with forecast-beating annual profits.

The FTSE 250 company enjoyed its best day since November, with the shares jumping 44½p, or 9.4 per cent, to 520p after reporting record underlying pre-tax profits of £591 million for the 12 months to the end of December, which it put down to the growth of its loan book, an improved net interest margin and net fair value gains of £48.5 million.

OSB announced some generous returns to shareholders including a £150 million share buyback and an unexpected special dividend of £50 million or 11.7p a share, on top of its full-year ordinary dividend of 30.5p per share.

It was, overall, a much calmer day for Britain's banks after the beleaguered lender Credit Suisse secured a lifeline from the Swiss central bank to shore up investor confidence. **Barclays**, which fell 9.1 per cent on Wednesday, rose 4¼p, or 3 per cent, to 142½p; **Lloyds Banking Group** recovered 1½p, or 3.2 per cent, to 47½p, while the asset manager **Abrdn** rose 11¼p, or 5.6 per cent, to 211p.

The early-morning relief rally in UK equities faded after the European Central Bank raised interest rates but shot up amid reports that some of America's biggest banks were discussing a potential deal with First Republic Bank that could include a big capital injection. The yo-yoing FTSE 100 closed up 65.58 points, or 0.9 per cent, to 7,410.03 and the more UK-focused FTSE 250 settled 132.73 points, or 0.7 per cent, higher at 18,758.58.

Leading the FTSE 100 higher was **Rentokil Initial**, which jumped 50½p, or 10.1 per cent, to a four-month high of 533½p on the back of its upbeat outlook and stellar annual results.

The FTSE 100 would have traded even higher had it not been for a few blue-chips trading ex-dividend, knocking nearly ten points off the index. They included M&G, one of the City's best-known fund managers, which lost 16¾p, or 8.4 per cent, to 181¾p, making it the biggest blue-chip faller; **Segro**, the warehouse landlord, fell 27½p, or 3.5 per cent, to 755¼p, and **Anglo American**, the miner, was off 80½p, or 3.2 per cent, to £24.79.

Investors punished **National Express** after the union representing the company's workers said thousands of its bus drivers would strike on Monday, causing shares in the FTSE 250 group, which have nearly halved in value over the past year, to drop 8p, or 6.3 per cent, to 120¼p.

The weaker performance of **Currys**' Nordic business, which bosses said faced "unrelenting competitive intensity", prompted investors to dump their shares in the electronics retailer, which closed down 6¾p, or 9.3 per cent, to 65p.

Investors found more to like in an update from **Investec**, the FTSE 250 Anglo-South African financial services group, which said profits for the year to the end of March would come in higher than the year before thanks to the positive effects from rising global interest rates. Investec's shares rose 11½p, or 2.6 per cent, to 451p.

Helios Towers, which builds, buys and operates telecoms towers in Africa, climbed 3¼p, or 3.1 per cent, to 107¾p as it posted a 25 per cent increase in full-year sales and record growth in sites and tenancies.

Shares in **Kooth**, the AIM-listed provider of online counselling services for young people, leapt 37 per cent, or 63½p, to 235p after it told investors it had been chosen as the primary vendor by the California department of healthcare services to provide a digital mental wellbeing platform.

Wall Street report

A rescue for First Republic Bank and a lifeline for Credit Suisse eased fears of a banking crisis. The Dow Jones industrial average rose 371.98 points, or 1.2 per cent, to 32,246.55 and the S&P 500 was up 68.35 points, or 1.8 per cent, at 3,960.28.

INDUSTRY

Diploma looks to tie up deal

The ever-acquisitive Diploma is tapping investors for another £240 million to fund the purchase of an American company that specialises in repairing robotic machinery.

FTSE 250-listed Diploma, one of Britain's leading suppliers of industrial parts, is paying £76 million for Nashville-based Tennessee Industrial Electronics (TIE). It is asking shareholders to back it with about £240 million, which it said would give it "greater flexibility" when looking at other possible acquisitions.



Diploma believes industrial automation is a growing business

"TIE is an excellent business in an exciting end market and has a track record of delivering strong growth at high margins," Johnny Thomson, Diploma's chief executive, said. Over the past four years, it has spent £820 million on 27 acquisitions, the largest of which was the £357 million purchase of Windy City Wire, a US wire and cable distributor.

TIE sells spare parts for manufacturing machines and robotic arms but also does repairs. Diploma said that it wanted more exposure to industrial automation, which it described as an "attractive, high growth market segment".

Diploma shares closed up by 52p, or 2 per cent, at £26.36.

London Grain Futures

LIFFE Wheat (close £/t)

Mar	236.00	May	212.75	Jul	unq
Nov	217.00	Jan	unq	Volume: 770	

London Metal Exchange

(Official)

Cash	3mth	Dec 22
Copper Gde A ($/tonne)		
8530.0-8535.0	8536.0-8537.0	8520.0-8530.0
Lead ($/tonne)		
2053.0-2055.0	2062.0-2064.0	2110.0-2115.0
Zinc Spec Hi Gde ($/tonne)		
2862.0-2864.0	2850.0-2852.0	2728.0-2733.0
Alum Hi Gde ($/tonne)		
2237.0-2237.5	2286.0-2287.0	2508.0-2513.0
Nickel ($/tonne)		
22600.0-22650.0	22860.0-22865.0	24420.0-24470.0
Tin ($/tonne)		**15mth**
22175.0-22225.0	22200.0-22250.0	22050.0-22100.0

Gold/Precious metals (US dollars per ounce)

Because of a technical issue, the gold fix prices are from Wednesday

Bullion: Open $1921.03

Close $1916.15-1916.42 High $1932.01

Low $1907.66

AM $1906.00 **PM** $1923.40

Krugerrand $1172.00-1244.00 (£968.20-1027.68)

Platinum $1092.00 (£902.11)

Silver $21.57 (£17.82)

Palladium $1721.11 (£1421.83)

European money deposits %

Currency	1mth	3mth	6mth	12mth
Dollar	0.13	0.20	0.29	0.55
Sterling	4.07	4.24	4.54	0.81
Euro	0.10	0.15	0.20	0.50

Money rates %

Base Rates Clearing Banks 4.00 ECB Refi 2.50 US Fed Fd 4.50-4.75

Halifax Mortgage Rate 5.74

Treasury Bills (Dis) Buy: 1 mth 4.125; 3 mth 4.249. Sell: 1 mth 3.849; 3 mth 4.000

	1 mth	2 mth	3 mth	6 mth	12 mth
Interbank Rates	4.1036	0.0000	4.3433	4.7122	0.0000
Eurodollar Deps	4.82-4.89	4.89-4.97	4.91-5.11	5.06-5.14	5.05-5.20

Sterling spot and forward rates

Mkt Rates for	Range	Close	1 month	3 month
Copenhagen	8.4425-8.5070	8.5036-8.5048	138ds	388ds
Euro	1.1424-1.1340	1.1419-1.1418	11pr	34pr
Montreal	1.6538-1.6668	1.6628-1.6630	4pr	10pr
New York	1.2029-1.2120	1.2104-1.2105	7pr	21pr
Oslo	12.934-13.090	13.033-13.042	129ds	327ds
Stockholm	12.709-12.812	12.735-12.738	232ds	630ds
Tokyo	158.58-161.91	161.80-161.82	67ds	194ds
Zurich	1.1162-1.1271	1.1271-1.1273	34ds	94ds

Premium = pr Discount = ds

Dollar rates

Australia	1.5057-1.5058
Canada	1.3738-1.3738
Denmark	7.0253-7.0258
Euro	0.9433-0.9433
Hong Kong	7.8498-7.8502
Japan	133.67-133.68
Malaysia	4.5000-4.5080
Norway	10.767-10.773
Singapore	1.3475-1.3476
Sweden	10.521-10.523
Switzerland	0.9311-0.9312

Other Sterling

Argentina peso	245.66-245.67
Australia dollar	1.8226-1.8228
Bahrain dinar	0.4531-0.4600
Brazil real	6.3694-6.3857
Euro	1.1417-1.1419
Hong Kong dollar	9.5013-9.5023
India rupee	100.05-100.05
Indonesia rupiah	18660-18660
Kuwait dinar KD	0.3706-0.3729
Malaysia ringgit	5.4510-5.4607
New Zealand dollar	1.9644-1.9648
Singapore dollar	1.6310-1.6313
S Africa rand	22.315-22.326
U A E dirham	4.4462-4.4486

Exchange rates

	Bid	Change
Australia $	1.821	
Canada $	1.667	+0.01
Denmark Kr	8.493	-0.01
Euro €	1.140	
Hong Kong $	9.507	+0.06
Hungary	453.881	-3.02
Indonesia	18627.522	+141.98
Israel Shk	4.440	+0.08
Japan Yen	161.071	+1.28
New Zealand $	1.962	+0.02
Norway Kr	13.076	+0.06
Poland	5.359	-0.01
Russia	93.077	+1.52
S Africa Rd	22.231	+0.07
Sweden Kr	12.726	-0.07
Switzerland Fr	1.126	+0.01
Turkey Lira	23.001	+0.16
USA $	1.211	+0.01

Rates supplied by Morningstar

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Operation Smile

CHANGE A CHILD'S LIFE FOREVER

Dilan's life was transformed by free cleft surgery



Dilan, before surgery

Dilan, after surgery

A new smile gave Dilan the happy, healthy future every child deserves.

Looking at Dilan now, it's hard to believe this beautiful boy once faced social stigma and isolation because of a cleft lip. When his mum Sandy saw her baby for the first time, she was thrown into despair – how could she ever afford surgery, and would Dilan be safe?

Operation Smile's medical volunteers welcomed her with open arms and gave Dilan the free, safe cleft surgery he needed to thrive. With your help we can bring safe surgery and vital services like nutritional support, dentistry and speech therapy to thousands more children around the world.

Donate today and change a child's life forever

www.operationsmile.org.uk/dilan5

020 3475 5126 | info@operationsmile.org.uk

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The Times unit trust information service

ALLIANZ GLOBAL INVESTORS
Inv Serv: 020 7065 1400 Helpline: 0800 317 573

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Gilt Yield A ‡@	206.01	...	+0.27	...
Strategic Bond Fund ‡@	155.73	...	+2.21	...
UK Corp Bond C ‡@	104.79	...	-0.78	3.87
UK Eqty C ‡@	6317.26	...	-14.91	3.28
UK Eqty Inc A ‡@	314.58	...	-0.41	...
UK Gwth A ‡@	7866.45	...	-27.30	...
UK Index A Inc ‡@	1423.81	...	-5.83	3.01
UK Mid Cap A ‡@	4654.61	...	-11.35	...

ARTEMIS FUND MGRS LTD
0800 092 2051
Authorised Inv Funds

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Capital R Acc ‡@	2095.06	...	-9.52	...
Euro Opps R Acc ‡@	91.26	...	-0.48	...
Euro Opps R Inc ‡@	85.36	...	-0.46	...
European Growth R Acc ‡@	390.84	...	+1.89	...
Global Energy R Acc ‡@	39.09	...	-1.91	1.14
Global Growth R Acc ‡@	331.11	...	-1.12	...
Global Income R Acc ‡@	150.12	...	-1.15	...
Global Income R Inc ‡@	94.37	...	-0.73	...
Global Select R Acc ‡@	145.65	...	+0.73	...
High Income R Inc ‡@	62.14	...	-0.18	...
Income R Acc ‡@	496.91	...	+0.92	...
Income R Inc ‡@	217.84	...	+0.40	...
Monthly Dist R Inc ‡@	63.43	...	-0.30	...
Strategic Assets R Acc ‡@	88.00	...	+0.77	...
Strategic Bond R M Acc ‡@	96.28	...	-0.38	...
Strategic Bond R M Inc ‡@	50.53	...	-0.20	...
Strategic Bond R Q Acc ‡@	96.11	...	-0.38	...
Strategic Bond R Q Inc ‡@	50.30	...	-0.19	...
UK Growth R Acc ‡@	679.41	...	-1.36	...
UK Smaller Cos R Acc ‡@	1837.11	...	-0.68	...
UK Special Sits R Acc ‡@	668.23	...	-1.85	...

AXA FRAMLINGTON UNIT MGMT LTD
Dling: 0845 602 1952 Priv Clients: 0845 777 5511

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Equity Inc ‡@	572.40	...	-2.70	4.43
Gilt Acc @	201.30	211.80	+0.10	...
Gilt Inc @	74.35	78.24	-0.39	...
Health Acc ‡@	2892.00	...	+36.00	...
Jap Smlr Co Ac @	62.56	66.09	-0.19	0.30
Managed Inc ‡@	138.30	...	...	4.20
Monthly Inc Inc ‡@	220.30	...	-0.50	4.42
UK Growth Inc ‡@	208.70	...	+1.00	0.64
UK Select Opps Inc ‡@	1831.00	...	...	1.03
UK Sml Cos Inc ‡@	255.00	...	+0.90	0.04

AXA FUND MANAGERS LTD
Admin & Enq 0117 989 0808
AXA Trusts

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Gen Acc ‡@	2101.00	...	+6.00	2.64
Gen Inc ‡@	1079.00	...	-2.00	2.70

UK/Global Investment Companies

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Euro Acc A ‡@	234.70	...	...	...
Extra Inc Inc B ‡@	86.74	...	+0.24	1.16
Global Gwth Acc R ‡@	288.10	...	+4.10	0.52
Japan Acc A ‡@	162.30	...	+2.20	...
Pac Gwth Acc A ‡@	479.80	...	-17.60	...

CIS UNIT MANAGERS LTD
08457 46 46 46

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
European Gwth ‡@	204.40	...	+1.40	...
Sus Leaders ‡@	756.10	...	+3.40	...
UK Growth ‡@	596.90	...	-2.60	...
UK Income ‡@	205.90	...	-0.90	...

CLOSE FUND MANAGEMENT LTD
0870 606 6402

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Beacon Inv ‡	84.88	...	+0.35	0.01

Dealing: 020 7426 6232

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Winchester ‡	3509.07	...	-149.95	0.86

EDENTREE INV MGMT LTD
0800 358 3010

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Resp & Sust Sterling Bond ‡	86.01	...	-0.20	4.01
Resp & Sust Eurp Eq ‡	317.20	...	+1.80	...
Resp & Sust Glbl Eq ‡	321.20	...	-1.20	...
Resp & Sust Mgd Income ‡	119.80	...	+0.40	...
Resp & Sust UK Eq ‡	213.20	...	+0.80	1.52
Resp & Sust UK Equity Opps ‡	268.60	...	+0.80	1.13

F & C FUND MANAGEMENT LTD (OEICS)
Enqs: 0870 601 6183 Dealing: 0870 601 6083
Share Class 1 - Retail

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Corporate Bd ‡@	49.99	...	-0.31	...
Emerging Mkts ‡@	116.50	...	-0.50	...
Euro Gwth & Inc 1 ‡@	1194.00	...	+11.00	...
Extra Inc Bond ‡@	43.34	...	-0.15	...
FTSE All-Shr Track ‡@	415.90	...	-0.60	...
Global Gwth SC1 ‡@	295.80	...	-2.30	...
High Inc Trst @	10.99	11.61	-0.03	...
Max Inc Bond ‡@	42.40	...	-0.16	...
Multi Man Caut ‡@	70.41	...	...	3.18
Multi Man Distr ‡@	60.44	...	...	3.37
North Amer ‡@	800.90	...	-4.00	...
Pacific Gwth ‡@	486.00	...	-1.70	0.04
Strategic Bd ‡@	194.40	...	-0.40	...
UK Equity ‡@	3446.00	...	+2.00	1.27
UK Gwth & Inc Acc 1 ‡@	658.50	...	...	...
UK Gwth & Inc Dist ‡@	234.70	...	...	...
UK Smaller Cos ‡@	1001.00	...	+5.10	...

FIDELITY INTERNATIONAL
Private Clnts 0800 414161 Broker Dlgs 0800 414181

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Amer Spec Sits ‡@	2175.00	...	+7.00	...
American ‡@	5004.00	...	+61.00	...
Euro Opps ‡@	568.80	...	+4.30	...
European ‡@	3329.00	...	+29.00	...
Extra Income ‡@	22.43	...	-0.11	5.29
Glob Spec Sits ‡@	5300.00	...	+27.00	...
Global Focus ‡@	2844.00	...	+14.00	...
International ‡@	149.50	...	+0.20	0.08
Japan ‡@	541.30	...	+5.80	...
Moneybldr Bal ‡@	43.09	...	+0.07	...
Moneybldr Glob	327.60	327.60	-0.10	0.21
Moneybldr Gwth ‡@	76.12	...	-0.95	2.97
Moneybldr Inc ‡@	29.37	...	+0.06	...
Moneybldr UK Ind ‡@	125.35	...	-0.23	...
Special Sits ‡@	4332.00	...	...	...
Wealthbuilder	69.75	72.18	+0.53	...

HALIFAX INVESTMENT FUND MGRS LTD
01296 386 386
Authorised Inv Funds
Share Class `C

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Corporate Bond ‡@	32.64	...	-0.03	...
Ethical ‡@	107.20	...	-0.70	...
European ‡@	107.80	...	+1.00	...
Far Eastern ‡	112.60	...	-0.90	1.77
Fund of Inv Tst ‡@	131.30	...	+0.60	...
Intl Gwth ‡	122.00	...	-0.70	...
Japanese ‡	68.42	...	+1.08	...
North Amer ‡	144.70	...	-0.80	...
Smaller Cos ‡@	101.00	...	+0.10	...
Special Sits ‡@	49.01	...	+0.69	...
UK Equity Inc ‡@	88.93	...	+0.35	...
UK FTSE 100 IT ‡@	68.01	...	-0.22	...
UK FTSE All-S IT ‡@	76.67	...	-0.16	...
UK Growth ‡@	80.08	...	-0.27	...

HSBC GLOBAL ASSET MGMT (UK) LTD
Enq: 0845 745 6123 Dlg: 0845 745 6126 Mon-Fri 8-6
HSBC Index Tracker Investment Funds (OEIC)

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Amer Ind Acc ‡@	892.82	...	+10.67	...
Amer Ind Inc ‡@	723.87	...	+9.27	...
Euro Ind Acc ‡@	1158.89	...	+10.09	...
Euro Ind Inc ‡@	740.43	...	+6.45	...
FTSE 100 Ind Acc ‡@	270.96	...	+0.65	...
FTSE 100 Ind Inc ‡@	123.11	...	+0.30	...
FTSE 250 Ind Acc ‡@	279.82	...	+1.07	...
FTSE 250 Ind Inc ‡@	171.85	...	+0.66	...
FTSE All-S Acc ‡@	685.74	...	-5.05	...
FTSE All-S Inc ‡@	346.68	...	-2.56	...
Jap Ind Acc ‡@	139.90	...	-0.65	...
Jap Ind Inc ‡@	109.04	...	-0.50	...
Pac Ind Acc ‡@	495.35	...	-4.49	2.58
Pac Ind Inc ‡@	311.97	...	-2.75	2.64

HSBC Investment Funds (OEIC) - Retail Share Class

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Balanced Acc ‡@	238.67	...	-0.11	...
Balanced Inc ‡@	151.95	...	-0.14	...
Corp Bd Acc ‡@	266.43	...	-1.37	...
Corp Bd Inc ‡@	103.37	...	-0.54	...
Gilt & Fd Int Acc ‡@	497.78	...	+1.62	...
Gilt & Fd Int Inc ‡@	74.17	...	+0.24	...
Income Acc ‡@	691.06	...	-3.37	...
Income Inc ‡@	283.53	...	-1.39	...
Monthly Inc Acc ‡@	313.41	...	+0.77	3.21
Monthly Inc Inc ‡@	125.64	...	-0.90	...
UK Grth & Inc Ret B Acc ‡@	141.11	...	-0.59	...
UK Grth & Inc Ret B Inc ‡@	62.29	...	-0.25	...
UK Gth & Inc Acc ‡@	141.11	...	-0.59	...
UK Gth & Inc Inc ‡@	62.29	...	-0.25	...

HSBC Specialist Investment Funds (OEIC)

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
American Index Retail Acc ‡@	892.82	...	+10.67	...
American Index Retail Inc ‡@	723.87	...	+9.27	...
Asian Gth Acc ‡@	147.77	...	-0.07	...
Asian Gth Inc ‡@	130.99	...	-0.06	...
Chinese Eq Acc ‡@	513.81	...	+0.27	...
Chinese Eq Inc ‡@	434.76	...	+0.22	...
Euro Gth Acc ‡@	973.97	...	+4.05	...
Euro Gth Inc ‡@	817.05	...	+3.39	...

IGNIS ASSET MGMT
Dlg: 0141 222 8282

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
American Gth Inc @	322.55	340.42	-3.34	...
Balanced Growth @	262.17	276.69	-0.93	1.52
Balanced Growth Acc @	393.13	414.92	-1.40	1.49
Corporate Bond ‡@	99.69	...	-0.89	4.77
European Growth @	403.88	426.26	-3.57	2.18
European Growth Acc @	475.71	502.07	-4.21	2.24
Glob Gwth @	331.53	349.90	-3.09	...
Higher Yield @	83.98	88.64	-0.29	...
Higher Yield Acc @	275.04	290.28	-0.92	...
Japan @	49.06	51.78	-0.03	...
Managed @	130.89	138.15	-0.06	0.66
Managed Trust @	71.96	76.96	+0.17	...
Mngd Pfolio Inc @	95.54	100.84	-0.11	0.58
Pacific Grth @	498.71	526.34	-2.81	1.34
Smaller Comp @	756.24	798.14	+1.64	0.15
Smaller Cos @	628.94	663.79	+1.36	0.21

INSIGHT INVESTMENT FDS MANAGEMENT LTD
Client Servs: 0207 163 4000
Insight Investment Multi-Manager Funds

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Well Bldr Bal Acc ‡@	96.05	...	-0.32	...
Well Bldr Gwth Acc ‡@	93.79	...	-0.36	...

INVESCO FUND MGRS LTD
Dling: 0800 085 8571 Inv Serv: 0800 085 8677
Brkr Serv: 0800 028 2121
INVESCO Funds

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
UK Str Inc N/Trl ‡@	323.57	...	-0.12	7.05

INVESCO PERPETUAL Funds

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Childrens Acc ‡@	447.84	...	+2.11	...
Corp Bond Acc ‡@	199.49	...	-0.60	2.82
High Income Inc ‡@	306.55	...	-1.32	...
Income & Grth Inc ‡@	402.50	...	-0.01	...
Income Inc ‡@	1211.07	...	-4.06	...
Money Acc ‡@	92.48	...	-0.01	1.12
Monthly Inc Plus Inc ‡@	91.51	...	-0.57	...
UK Aggressive Inc ‡@	154.28	...	-0.24	3.15
UK Growth Acc ‡@	866.11	...	-3.81	...
UK Sml Cos Eqty Acc ‡@	1322.16	...	+2.91	...
UK Sml Cos Gwth ‡@	82.54	...	+0.04	...

INVESTEC FUND MGRS
Broker Support and Dealing: 020 7597 1900
OEIC Series i,ii,iii, & iv

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
American A Acc ‡@	654.63	...	+11.20	...
Asia ex Japan A Acc ‡@	745.85	...	+3.28	...
Capital Accumulator A Acc ‡@	231.48	...	-3.81	...
Cautious Managed A Acc ‡@	376.57	...	+0.96	...
Cautious Managed A Inc ‡@	237.10	...	+0.61	...
Diversified Growth A Acc ‡@	128.78	...	+0.43	...
Diversified Growth A Inc ‡@	136.37	...	+0.45	...
Diversified Income A Acc ‡@	319.83	...	+0.28	...
Diversified Income A Inc ‡@	67.93	...	+0.05	...
Emerging Mkts Blended Debt A Acc ‡@	112.57	...	+0.12	...
Emerging Mkts Blended Debt A Acc Gross ‡@	125.82	...	+0.20	...
Emerging Mkts Blended Debt A Inc ‡@	64.36	...	+0.07	...
Emerging Mkts Equity A Acc ‡@	145.57	...	-0.02	...
Emrg Mkts Local Curr Debt A Acc ‡@	181.83	...	+0.28	...
Emrg Mkts Local Curr Debt A Inc ‡@	70.45	...	+0.11	...
Emrg Mkts Local Curr Debt Gross I Acc ‡@	220.49	...	-0.05	5.42
Enhanced Natural Resources A Acc ‡@	134.24	...	-1.25	...
Global Bond A Acc ‡@	139.30	...	+4.03	...
Global Bond A Inc ‡@	109.33	...	+3.00	...
Global Bond I Gross Inc ‡@	1167.00	...	+29.78	...
Global Dynamic A Acc ‡@	193.61	...	+1.95	0.47
Global Energy A Acc ‡@	170.97	...	-1.14	...
Global Equity A Acc ‡@	224.29	...	+1.10	...
Global Franchise A Acc ‡@	300.03	...	+3.39	...
Global Free Enterprise A Acc ‡@	1193.10	...	+5.29	...
Global Gold A Acc ‡@	190.73	...	+1.77	0.53
Global Special Situations A Acc ‡@	313.30	...	-0.94	...
Global Special Situations A Inc ‡@	242.34	...	-0.72	...
Managed Growth A Acc ‡@	288.74	...	+0.04	...
Monthly High Income A Acc ‡@	243.45	...	+0.43	...
Monthly High Income A Inc ‡@	63.17	...	+0.01	...
Multi-Asset Protector A Acc ‡@	166.74	...	+0.07	...
Strategic Bond A Acc ‡@	244.54	...	+0.19	...
Strategic Bond A Inc ‡@	119.47	...	+0.09	...
Target Return A Acc ‡@	102.03	...	+0.44	0.82
Target Return A Inc ‡@	87.63	...	+0.01	0.87
UK Alpha A Acc ‡@	2602.72	...	+13.49	...
UK Blue Chip A Acc ‡@	770.11	...	+3.15	...
UK Smaller Companies A Acc ‡@	4569.53	...	+9.17	...
UK Smaller Companies A Inc ‡@	4098.59	...	+8.22	...
UK Special Situations A Acc ‡@	1364.57	...	-4.33	...
UK Special Situations A Inc ‡@	489.16	...	-1.55	...

For ISIS Asset Mgmt see F&C Fd Mgmt Ltd (OEICS)

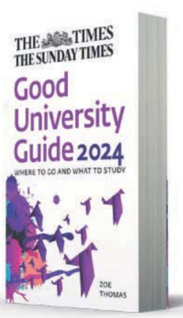
JANUS HENDERSON INVESTORS
Investors Serv: 0800 832 832 Dlng: 0845 946 4646

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
All Stks Credit A Inc ‡@	115.30	...	-0.20	1.88
Asian Div Inc U Trst Inc ‡@	78.17	...	-0.76	5.87
Cautious Man Fd A Acc ‡@	284.00	...	-0.20	...
Cautious Man Fd A Inc ‡@	140.10	...	-0.10	...
China Opp Fund A Acc ‡@	1170.00	...	-22.00	...
Emg Mkts Opps Fd A Acc ‡@	190.70	...	-1.60	0.73
Erpn Grth Fund A Acc ‡@	290.20	...	+1.40	...
Erpn Sel Opps Fd A Acc ‡@	2191.00	...	+1.00	...
Fix Int Mnthly Inc Fd Acc ‡@	28.56	...	+0.06	...
Global Equity Fund Acc ‡@	4147.00	...	+10.00	...
Global Equity Income A Inc ‡@	64.49	...	-0.15	...
Global Tech A Acc ‡@	2881.00	...	-2.00	...
Instl UK Idx Opps A Acc ‡@	111.25	...	-0.10	...
M-Asset Abs Ret A Acc ‡@	162.70	...	+0.20	...
M-Man Active Fd A Acc ‡@	250.90	...	-0.70	...
M-Man Inc Grth A Inc ‡@	144.90	...	-0.30	...
M-Man Inc Grth Fd A Acc ‡@	186.30	...	-0.30	...
Sterling Bond U Trst Acc ‡@	206.20	...	-0.30	1.62
Sterling Bond U Trst Inc ‡@	56.33	...	-0.07	1.64
Strategic Bond A Inc ‡@	105.00	...	+0.80	...
UK Abs Ret Fd A Acc ‡@	167.20	...	-0.10	...
UK Alpha Fund A Acc ‡@	134.60	...	+0.20	...
UK Irsh Sm Co Fd A Acc ‡@	742.50	...	-1.70	...
UK Property A Acc @	264.95	278.15	+0.01	2.63
UK Property A Inc @	105.80	111.07	...	2.68
US Growth Fund A Acc ‡@	1682.00	...	+24.00	...

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Valid until September 1, 2023. T&Cs apply.

JP MORGAN ASSET MGMT
OEIC

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Asia A Acc ‡@	259.00	...	+2.20	...
Emerging Mkts ‡@	261.50	...	+3.00	...
Eur Dyn (ex-UK) A Acc ‡@	270.30	...	+4.70	...
Euro Smllr Cos ‡@	864.00	...	+17.40	...
Europe A Acc ‡@	1734.00	...	+35.00	...
Gbl Hi Yld Bd A Acc ‡@	117.30	...	+1.10	5.30
Gbl Hi Yld Bd A Inc ‡@	30.89	...	+0.29	5.45
Gl ex-UK Bd A Acc ‡@	257.40	...	-0.70	0.07
Gl ex-UK Bd A Inc ‡@	196.80	...	-0.50	0.08
Glb Fins A Acc ‡@	1077.00	...	+1.00	...
Global A Acc ‡@	2049.00	...	+11.00	...
Japan A Acc ‡@	516.80	...	+6.20	...
Multi-Man Tst A Acc ‡@	1268.00	...	+16.00	...
Multi-Man Tst A Inc ‡@	1127.00	...	+15.00	...
Nat Resources ‡@	951.20	...	+17.30	2.50
New Europe A ‡@	155.70	...	+12.00	2.11
Portfolio ‡@	295.60	...	+0.40	0.98
Stg Corp Bd A Acc ‡@	85.59	...	-0.13	...
Stg Corp Bd A Inc ‡@	48.30	...	-0.08	...
UK Act 350 A Acc ‡@	199.00	...	-2.20	...
UK Dynamic Acc ‡@	206.70	...	+4.30	2.07
UK Dynamic Inc ‡@	148.20	...	+3.10	2.03
UK Equity A Acc ‡@	401.90	...	+0.60	3.45
UK Equity A Inc ‡@	46.44	...	+0.07	3.49
UK Eqy & Bd Inc Acc ‡@	167.10	...	-0.20	...
UK Eqy & Bd Inc Inc ‡@	90.29	...	-0.48	...
UK Higher Inc A Acc ‡@	1132.00	...	+7.00	...
UK Higher Inc A Inc ‡@	531.30	...	+2.00	...
UK Sm Cos A Acc ‡@	563.30	...	+7.00	...
UK Str Eq Inc A Acc ‡@	197.90	...	+3.50	...
UK Str Eq Inc A Inc ‡@	100.50	...	+1.77	...
US A Acc ‡@	1036.00	...	+25.00	...
US Sm Cos A Acc ‡@	976.20	...	+14.00	...

JUPITER UT MGRS LTD
020 7581 3020

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Absolute Return ‡@	32.09	...	-0.01	...
Distribution and Growth ‡@	95.68	...	-0.07	...
Emg Euro Opps ‡@	145.34	...	-31.23	...
Euro Special Sits ‡@	446.81	...	+3.86	...
European ‡@	2843.79	...	+21.17	...
Financial Opps ‡@	670.91	...	-1.42	0.19
Income Trust ‡@	501.67	...	-1.73	...
Merlin Bal (Acc) ‡@	227.94	...	-0.14	...
Merlin Gwth (Acc) ‡	529.97	...	-0.59	...
Merlin Inc (Acc) ‡@	339.26	...	-0.29	...
Merlin Wwide (Inc) ‡	374.29	...	-0.65	...
UK Growth ‡@	247.36	...	+1.37	...
UK Special Sits (Inc) ‡@	206.90	...	-1.29	...

LEGAL & GENERAL (UT MGRS) LTD
Enquiries: 0870 050 0955 Dealing: 0870 050 0956

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Equity Acc @	2616.00	2639.00	-8.00	2.12
Equity Dist @	893.80	902.00	-2.70	2.15
Euro Ind Acc ‡@	511.10	...	+3.20	...
Euro Ind Inc ‡@	334.80	...	+2.10	...
Fixed Int Acc ‡@	131.30	...	-0.50	...
Fixed Int Dist ‡@	61.25	...	-0.23	...
Glob Gwth Acc @	243.90	243.90	-1.30	1.15
Glob Health Acc ‡@	105.00	...	-0.20	...
Glob Tech Acc ‡@	88.06	...	+0.36	...
Gwth Tst Acc @	106.00	106.50	-1.00	0.17
High Inc Acc ‡@	121.30	...	-0.70	5.13
Japan Ind Acc ‡@	68.45	...	-0.23	...
Pacific Ind Acc ‡@	198.40	...	-2.00	2.97
UK 100 Ind Acc @	180.90	180.90	+0.90	3.19
UK Active Opps Acc @	249.90	252.90	-0.10	...
UK Index Acc ‡@	336.00	...	-0.70	...
UK Index Dist ‡@	161.90	...	-0.30	...
US Ind Acc ‡@	775.90	...	-6.10	...
Worldwide Acc ‡@	329.30	...	-0.40	...

M & G SECURITIES
Enq: 0800 390 390 Dealing Line: 0800 328 3196
Authorised Inv Funds

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Charifund Inc ‡	1450.07	...	-5.86	5.41

Sterling Class A Investment Funds 1

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Euro Smlr Cos Acc ‡	525.29	...	-3.39	...
Euro Smlr Cos Inc ‡	462.50	...	-3.00	0.69

Sterling Class A Investment Funds 2

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Extra Income Inc ‡	680.75	...	-2.59	4.92
Gilt & Fxd Int Inc ‡	77.75	...	-0.13	2.01
Gl Hi Yd Bd Inc ‡	39.27	...	-0.13	...
Index Linked Bd Inc ‡	118.09	...	-0.61	...
Index Trckr Inc ‡	73.98	...	-0.11	3.59
Short Dated Corp Bd Inc ‡	24.82	...	-0.04	...
UK Select A Inc ‡	2660.34	...	+9.70	...

Sterling Class A Investment Funds 3

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Corp Bd A Inc ‡	34.01	...	-0.09	3.58
Dividend Inc ‡	53.05	...	-0.13	...
Recovery A Inc ‡	105.33	...	-0.38	...
Sml Cos Inc ‡	327.13	...	+0.21	...

Sterling Class A Investment Funds 4

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Episode Allocation A Inc ‡@	135.59	...	+0.22	...

MARKS & SPENCER UNIT TRUST LTD
0808 005 5555

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
High Income	86.20	86.20	-0.18	...
High Income Acc	241.10	241.10	-0.50	...
UK 100 Comp Acc @	438.90	438.90	-17.50	...
UK 100 Cos @	215.60	215.60	-8.60	...
UK Select Pflo @	325.00	325.00	-14.10	...
UK Selection Port Acc @	672.60	672.60	-29.00	...
Worldwide Mgd Acc @	920.00	920.00	-5.70	...
Wwide Mgd @	538.10	538.10	-3.30	1.30

MORGAN STANLEY INVESTMENT MGMT LTD
Enquires: 0800 0961 962
The Morgan Stanley Funds (UK)
Class A Shares
Equity

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Dev Opp Fund F Acc ‡@	756.76	...	+1.77	...
Dev Opp Fund I Acc ‡@	752.79	...	+1.77	...
Glob Bal Inc F F Acc ‡@	903.78	...	+1.91	5.33
Glob Bal Inc F F Inc ‡@	836.84	...	+1.78	...
Glob Bal Inc F I Acc ‡@	902.45	...	+1.91	5.35
Glob Bal Inc F I Inc ‡@	835.48	...	+1.77	5.56
Glob Bal Sust F F Acc ‡@	919.05	...	+2.88	1.24
Glob Bal Sust F F Inc ‡@	904.13	...	+2.84	1.25
Glob Bal Sust F I Acc ‡@	917.90	...	+2.88	1.18
Glob Bal Sust F I Inc ‡@	903.87	...	+2.83	1.17
Glob Br Eq Inc Fund F Inc ‡@	1276.47	...	+12.06	...
Glob Br Eq Inc Fund I Acc ‡@	1764.25	...	+16.66	...
Glob Br Eq Inc Fund I Inc ‡@	1365.86	...	+12.89	...
Glob Br Fund I Acc (PH) ‡@	1489.41	...	+11.45	...
Glob Br Fund I Acc (PH) ‡@	13189.66	...	+123.49	...
Glob Br Fund I Inc (PH) ‡@	1421.11	...	+10.92	...
Glob Br Fund I Inc (PH) ‡@	3610.81	...	+33.81	...
Glob Ins Fund F Acc ‡@	509.35	...	+13.28	...
Glob Ins Fund F Inc ‡@	509.35	...	+13.28	...
Glob Ins Fund I Acc ‡@	506.98	...	+13.22	...
Glob Ins Fund I Inc ‡@	506.98	...	+13.22	...
Glob Sust Fund F Acc (PH) ‡@	1090.92	...	+6.65	...
Glob Sust Fund F Inc ‡@	1193.41	...	+9.14	...
Glob Sust Fund I Acc ‡@	1210.16	...	+9.27	...
Glob Sust Fund I Acc (PH) ‡@	1089.73	...	+6.64	...
Glob Sustain Fund F Acc ‡@	1216.70	...	+9.33	...
Stg Corp Bond F F Acc ‡@	120.24	...	-0.41	...
Stg Corp Bond F F Inc ‡@	94.64	...	-0.33	...
Stg Corp Bond F I Acc ‡@	2556.85	...	-8.73	...
Stg Corp Bond F I Inc ‡@	1334.49	...	-4.55	...
Sust Fixed Inc Opps F F Acc ‡@	927.36	...	-0.02	2.47
Sust Fixed Inc Opps F F Inc ‡@	889.88	...	-0.02	2.53
Sust Fixed Inc Opps F I Acc ‡@	923.19	...	-0.02	2.28
Sust Fixed Inc Opps F I Inc ‡@	889.47	...	-0.02	2.31
US Adv F F Acc ‡@	1409.62	...	+41.17	...
US Adv F F Acc (PH) ‡@	777.75	...	+21.46	...
US Adv F I Acc ‡@	1499.44	...	+43.78	...
US Adv F I Acc (PH) ‡@	815.09	...	+22.47	...

SANTANDER UNIT TST MGRS
08457 413002

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Bal Pfolio Inc ‡@	110.50	...	+0.40	...
Bal Port Gwth Acc ‡@	228.30	...	...	...
Equity Inc Inc ‡@	193.50	...	-3.00	...
N&P UK Gwth Inc ‡@	182.80	...	+0.10	3.09
Stkmkt 100 Tkr @	255.00	255.00	-3.40	...
UK Growth Acc ‡@	439.90	...	-6.90	...
UK Growth Inc ‡@	235.00	...	-3.70	...

SCOTTISH MUTUAL INV MNGRS LTD
0141 248 6100

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
European Inc	1777.00	1873.48	+4.40	...
Far Eastern Inc	584.69	617.09	-0.73	...
Intl Growth Inc	380.56	400.59	+0.02	0.75
Japanese Inc	41.85	41.85	+0.43	...
Mutual European	2762.93	2908.99	-21.63	...
Mutual Far Eastern	917.05	967.86	-7.36	0.90
Mutual North Am	1983.00	2092.88	+6.23	0.24
Mutual UK Eq	1369.20	1445.07	-3.48	...
Nth American Inc	1227.65	1295.67	-7.28	...
UK Equity Inc	539.49	569.38	-1.23	...

SCOTTISH WIDOWS UNIT TRUST MGRS
0845 300 2244
Authorised Inv Funds (OEICs)
OEIC A Class
Managed Investment Funds

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Bal Port A Acc ‡@	237.60	...	+0.80	...
Caut Port A Acc ‡@	207.10	...	+0.30	0.43
Caut Port A Inc ‡@	152.00	...	+0.30	0.60
Opps Port A Acc ‡@	280.20	...	+1.30	...
Prog Port A Acc ‡@	266.60	...	+1.10	...

Overseas Growth Investment Funds

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Eur Sel Gth A Acc ‡@	3350.00	...	-141.00	...

Tracker and Specialist Investment Funds

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
UK Trkr A Acc ‡@	369.40	...	-15.10	...
UK Trkr A Inc ‡@	185.30	...	-7.50	...

UK and Income Investment Funds

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Corp Bond A Acc ‡@	284.00	...	-1.50	...
Corp Bond A Inc ‡@	105.10	...	-0.50	...
Envir Invtr A Acc ‡@	372.10	...	-10.70	1.28
Hi Inc Bond A Ac ‡@	227.90	...	-0.40	5.22
Hi Inc Bond A Inc ‡@	67.44	...	-0.10	5.37
Hi Res A Acc ‡@	370.20	...	-10.30	...
Hi Res A Inc ‡@	114.80	...	-3.30	...
Safety Plus A Acc ‡@	40.49	...	...	...
Strat Inc A Acc ‡@	187.20	...	-0.40	...
Strat Inc A Inc ‡@	82.06	...	-0.17	3.23
UK Gwth A Acc ‡@	189.30	...	-7.30	...
UK Sel Gwth A Acc ‡@	2246.00	...	-67.00	...

OEIC B Class
Tracker and Specialist Investment Funds

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
UK Trkr B Acc ‡@	407.90	...	-16.60	...
UK Trkr B Inc ‡@	184.20	...	-7.50	...

UK and Income Investment Funds

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Corp Bond B Acc ‡@	370.70	...	+0.90	...
Corp Bond B Inc ‡@	136.30	...	+0.30	...
UK Gwth B Acc ‡@	205.60	...	-0.30	1.79
UK Sel Gwth B Acc ‡@	2481.00	...	...	1.09

OEIC C Class
UK and Income Investment Funds

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
UK Gth C Inc ‡@	122.10	...	-4.70	...
UK Sel Gwth C Acc ‡@	2598.00	...	...	1.29

STANDARD LIFE INVESTMENTS
0845 279 3003
Investment Funds (OEIC) - Retail Shares

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
AAA Inc CAT Acc ‡@	89.60	...	+0.25	1.38
AAA Inc CAT Inc ‡@	50.25	...	+0.14	1.39
AAA Income Acc ‡@	97.60	...	+0.28	...
Amer Eq Gth Acc ‡@	198.60	...	-0.70	...
Corp Bond Acc ‡@	155.80	...	-0.40	...
Corp Bond Inc ‡@	51.72	...	-0.13	...
Euro Eq Gth Acc ‡@	262.10	...	+3.90	...
Glb Advtg CAT Acc ‡@	146.60	...	-0.30	...
Glob Advtg Acc ‡@	193.60	...	-0.30	...
Glob Eq Uncstrd Acc ‡@	153.70	...	+0.30	...
Higher Inc Acc ‡@	142.50	...	-0.30	4.40
Higher Inc Inc ‡@	43.92	...	-0.09	4.52
Japan Eq Gth Acc ‡@	127.40	...	...	...
Managed Acc ‡@	353.20	...	-0.50	...
Select Inc Acc ‡@	91.51	...	...	2.21
Select Inc Inc ‡@	51.26	...	-0.26	2.21
UK Eq Gth Acc ‡@	372.70	...	+1.70	...
UK Eq Hi Alpha ‡@	230.00	...	+1.00	...
UK Eq Hi Inc Acc ‡@	259.20	...	-2.20	...
UK Eq Hi Inc Inc ‡@	70.16	...	-0.58	...
UK Ethical Acc ‡@	194.00	...	+1.10	...
UK Opps Acc ‡@	234.40	...	...	...
UK Opps Inc ‡@	211.70	...	...	...
UK Smlr Cos Acc ‡@	734.00	...	+4.50	...

SVS BROWN SHIPLEY FUNDS
Enquiries:0141 222 1151

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Balanced A Acc ‡@	131.93	...	+0.24	...
Balanced A Inc ‡@	117.61	...	+0.22	...
Cautious A Acc ‡@	111.28	...	+0.28	...
Cautious A Inc ‡@	96.03	...	+0.24	...
Dynamic A Acc ‡@	318.77	...	+0.58	...
Dynamic A Inc ‡@	286.46	...	+0.51	...
Growth A Acc ‡@	329.99	...	+0.61	...
Income A Acc ‡@	243.62	...	+0.58	...
Sterling Bond Acc ‡@	242.37	...	-0.28	...
Sterling Bond Inc ‡@	97.00	...	-0.11	...

THREADNEEDLE INVESTMENTS
Client Serv: 0800 0683000
Intermediary Serv: 0800 0684000
Institutional Shares (Class 2) (500000 GBP)

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Threadneedle UK Eq Opps Ins Inc ‡@	122.54	...	+0.56	...

Retail Shares (Class 1)

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Threadneedle HY Bd Rtl Inc ‡@	36.02	...	-0.11	4.27
Threadneedle Mthly Etr Inc Rtl Inc ‡@	76.32	...	-0.01	...
Threadneedle SterlingCorpBd Ins Inc ‡@	53.68	...	-0.07	...
Threadneedle SterlingCorpBd Rtl Inc ‡@	53.61	...	-0.07	...
Threadneedle Stg Bd Ret Inc ‡@	45.10	...	+0.02	1.38
Threadneedle Strat Bd Ret ‡@	40.53	...	-0.22	...
Threadneedle UK Eq Inc Rtl Inc ‡@	95.31	...	+0.71	...
Threadneedle UK Growth & Inc Rtl Inc ‡@	87.50	...	+0.54	...
Threadneedle UK Insti Rtl ‡@	175.78	...	...	...
Threadneedle UK Mthly Inc Rtl Inc ‡@	66.57	...	-0.08	...
Threadneedle UK Rtl Inc ‡@	132.41	...	+1.05	...
Threadneedle UK Smaller Coms Rtl Inc ‡@	342.91	...	+0.03	...

For Resolution see Ignis

TU FUND MANAGERS LIMITED

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
British	884.70	884.70	+3.80	...
European	210.70	219.40	+1.00	...

* Yield expressed as CAR (Compound Annual Return); † Ex dividend; ‡Middle price; . . . No significant data. # Periodic charge deducted from capital; @ Exit charge

British funds

Index-linked

12 month High	Low	Stock	Price (£)	+/–	Int Yld %	Grs rd yld
389.95	359.04	Tr IL 2½% 24 *	373.59	– .73	1.45	0.40
111.01	99.31	Tr IL 0⅛% 24	99.77	– .13	...	0.36
116.38	96.90	Tr IL 0⅛% 26	100.40	– .19	...	–0.01
129.46	99.85	Tr IL 1¼% 27	106.58	– .17	1.28	–0.15
124.11	93.33	Tr IL 0⅛% 28	101.65	– .21	...	–0.18
125.34	92.36	Tr IL 0⅛% 29	101.66	– .16	...	–0.15
132.82	90.61	Tr IL 0⅛% 31	103.45	– .12	...	–0.28
388.85	301.39	Tr IL 4⅛% 30 *	346.56	– .66	1.86	–0.19
150.66	99.08	Tr IL 1¼% 32	114.19	– .20	1.10	–0.20
148.08	92.56	Tr IL 0¾% 34	108.82	– .23	...	–0.05
305.60	206.76	Tr IL 2% 35 *	251.43	– .72	0.97	0.05
146.28	82.01	Tr IL 0⅛% 36	100.54	– .29	...	0.09
168.29	94.08	Tr IL 1⅛% 37	114.29	– .40	1.04	0.14
151.09	78.25	Tr IL 0⅛% 39	97.95	– .46	...	0.26
165.05	84.60	Tr IL 0⅝% 40	105.59	– .50	...	0.29
158.34	75.20	Tr IL 0⅛% 41	96.65	– .53	...	0.31
174.67	82.66	Tr IL 0⅝% 42	105.24	– .73	0.59	0.35
163.39	72.26	Tr IL 0⅛% 44	93.83	– .64	...	0.43
168.94	70.25	Tr IL 0⅛% 46	92.19	– .78	...	0.48
195.72	80.78	Tr IL 0¾% 47	105.75	– .91	0.72	0.50
176.40	66.79	Tr IL 0⅛% 48	90.94	– .83	...	0.51
195.77	72.64	Tr IL 0½% 50	99.80	– .95	...	0.51
192.33	65.69	Tr IL 0¼% 52	93.45	–1.03	...	0.49
253.30	88.77	Tr IL 1¼% 55	123.51	–1.59	1.11	0.47
201.56	60.50	Tr IL 0⅛% 56	89.54	–1.27	...	0.46
206.26	60.14	Tr IL 0⅛% 58	89.44	–1.46	...	0.45
234.74	64.93	Tr IL 0⅜% 62	98.68	–1.62	...	0.41
237.83	55.87	Tr IL 0⅛% 65	90.86	–1.68	...	0.36
253.73	54.65	Tr IL 0⅛% 68	91.05	–1.79	...	0.34
289.24	55.40	Tr IL 0⅛% 73	96.22	–2.00	...	0.20

Longs (Over 15 years)

12 month High	Low	Stock	Price (£)	+/–	Int Yld %	Grs rd yld
131.88	94.91	Tr 4¼% 36	107.92	– .28	3.94	3.49
100.28	67.54	Tr 1¾% 37	79.15	– .20	...	3.61
144.27	98.36	Tr 4¾% 38	113.28	– .26	4.19	3.63
91.00	58.05	Tr 1⅛% 39	69.44	– .18	...	3.68
138.03	92.08	Tr 4¼% 39	106.93	– .24	3.97	3.68
140.03	91.30	Tr 4¼% 40	106.66	– .20	...	3.73
91.69	54.72	Tr 1¼% 41	66.91	– .16	...	3.73
127.42	76.78	Tr 3¼% 44	92.27	– .11	...	3.79
147.79	93.79	Tr 4½% 42	110.42	– .23	4.08	3.75
133.20	79.61	Tr 3½% 45	95.59	– .10	...	3.80
150.25	89.35	Tr 4¼% 46	106.95	– .13	3.97	3.80
83.33	43.93	Tr 0⅞% 46	55.77	– .08	...	3.78
95.55	51.06	Tr 1½% 47	63.79	– .11	...	3.79
101.16	53.78	Tr 1¾% 49	66.76	– .12	...	3.77
155.93	89.75	Tr 4¼% 49	107.65	– .17	3.95	3.79
76.60	35.82	Tr 0⅝% 50	46.78	– .11	...	3.73
183.85	63.35	Tr 0⅛% 51	89.95	– .89	...	0.51
90.04	44.40	Tr 1¼% 51	56.63	– .12	...	3.74
149.35	82.51	Tr 3¾% 52	99.82	– .23	...	3.76
96.56	46.78	Tr 1½% 53	59.61	– .17	...	3.73
99.73	48.25	Tr 1⅝% 54	61.37	– .18	...	3.71
168.18	90.79	Tr 4¼% 55	109.66	– .46	3.88	3.74
104.20	49.39	Tr 1¾% 57	63.10	– .20	...	3.64
169.63	87.32	Tr 4% 60	107.31	– .32	...	3.64
69.69	26.21	Tr 0½% 61	37.18	– .17	...	3.46
131.14	60.88	Tr 2½% 65	76.86	– .28	...	3.56
165.72	79.01	Tr 3½% 68	98.40	– .32	...	3.57
105.72	42.99	Tr 1⅝% 71	57.25	– .20	...	3.44

Mediums (5-15 years)

12 month High	Low	Stock	Price (£)	+/–	Int Yld %	Grs rd yld
99.56	97.34	Tr 0¾% 23	98.94	– .01	...	3.79
101.50	98.04	Tr 2¼% 23	99.23	– .02	...	3.88
98.11	94.34	Tr 0⅛% 24	97.00	– .02	...	3.66
99.63	94.79	Tr 1% 24	97.10	– .04	...	3.71
103.69	96.82	Tr 2¾% 24	98.71	– .06	...	3.65
110.90	100.77	Tr 5% 25	102.78	– .06	4.86	3.53
98.28	90.15	Tr 0⅝% 25	94.25	– .05	...	3.33
102.74	93.15	Tr 2% 25	96.67	– .07	...	3.42
96.04	86.33	Tr 0⅛% 26	91.35	– .07	...	3.30
101.30	89.28	Tr 1½% 26	94.20	– .06	...	3.34
100.11	85.65	Tr 1¼% 27	91.79	– .11	...	3.29
116.31	98.23	Tr 4¼% 27	104.22	– .12	4.08	3.28
93.49	79.15	Tr 0⅛% 28	85.82	– .12	...	3.30
102.20	84.72	Tr 1⅝% 28	91.71	– .15	...	3.26
130.07	107.13	Tr 6% 28	113.88	– .19	5.27	3.32
94.38	77.61	Tr 0½% 29	84.85	– .11	...	3.36
96.69	78.21	Tr 0⅞% 29	86.04	– .12	...	3.24
91.88	72.39	Tr 0⅜% 30	80.80	– .12	...	3.25
127.71	101.89	Tr 4¾% 30	110.37	– .18	4.30	3.22
89.46	69.25	Tr 0¼% 31	78.01	– .14	...	3.27
95.34	73.06	Tr 1% 32	82.35	– .14	...	3.31
126.10	98.13	Tr 4¼% 32	107.95	– .18	3.94	3.24
93.01	68.57	Tr 0⅞% 33	78.33	– .17	...	3.37
132.42	98.89	Tr 4½% 34	110.28	– .25	4.08	3.41
87.26	61.24	Tr 0⅝% 35	71.44	– .20	...	3.49

Shorts (under 5 years)

12 month High	Low	Stock	Price (£)	+/–	Int Yld %	Grs rd yld
...	...	Tr 0⅛% 23	...		...	...
97.16	90.04	Tr 0¼% 25	93.69	– .04	...	3.77
96.10	84.28	Tr 0⅜% 26	89.73	– .11	...	3.43

* maturities having an eight-month indexation lag.

This is a paid for information service. For further details on a particular fund, readers should contact their fund manager.

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Business Equity prices

Automobiles & parts

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Yld%	P/E
381½	89½	Aston Martin Lag	239½	-¾	...	-1.4

Banking & finance

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Yld%	P/E
236	133	**Abrdn**	211	+11⅛	...	4.5
2653	1729	**Admiral**	1954½	+58	...	9.9
71⅜	33½	ADVFN♦	35½	-½	...	6.2
390	246⅛	AJ Bell	346	+12⅜	...	32.4
28009⅞	20864	Aon Corpn	24532	+930½	...	59.8
42¾	21½	Appreciate Group♦	42⅛	...	...	18.3
1030	645	Arbuthnot Bkg♦	920	-20	...	20.3
17	11	Argo Group♦	12½	...	...	5.7
286⅜	180⅞	Ashmore‡	239⅜	+5½	...	8.1
1542⅞	1166	Aus New Z	1247¾	-31¼	...	9.7
602⅞	373¾	**Aviva**	415	+8	...	54.6
341½	193⅜	Banco Santander	290½	+9⅛	...	6.9
3000	1126	Bank of Georgia	2440	-65	...	7.5
189⅝	135⅝	**Barclays‡**	142⅜	+4⅛	...	3.4
⅜	...	Blue Star Capital♦	⅛	...	...	4.6
346	277	BP Marsh&Ptnrs♦	318	...	...	8.7
20½	7⅞	Braveheart Inv♦	8¼	...	...	0.2
517	283½	Brewin Dolphin	515	+1	...	28.1
365	173⅞	Bridgepoint	215⅜	+10⅛	...	13.4
80½	40	Cenkos Secs♦	40½	...	...	8.2
325	262½	Chesnara	281½	...	...	15.6
63½	9	City of Lon Gp♦	10	+1	...	-0.6
498	343½	City Lon Inv Gp‡	427	+2	...	10.0
1217	894	Close Bros	904	-16½	...	6.7
317	211½	CMC Markets	236½	+2½	...	7.2
1059⅞	508⅝	Commerzbk	834½	+2⅜	...	42.7
1095	673¾	Deutsche Bk	831⅛	-10¾	...	9.7
280½	154⅝	Direct Line Ins	154⅝	+2⅝	...	6.4
58½	57	Downing ONE VCT	57	...	...	7.7
1⅛	⅜	Drumz♦	⅝	...	...	-5.6
167⅞	76⅜	EFG-Hermes Hldg	90	-9	...	5.7
255	122½	EPE Special Opps♦	174	-3	...	9.7
1242⅞	828¾	FBD	1242⅞	...	...	5.5
72½	67½	Fiske♦	67½	...	...	12.0
78	59	Frenkel Topping♦	68	...	...	39.5
840	524	Georgia Capital	741	-10	...	2.0
1005	710	Gresham House♦	740	...	...	29.7
506	299	H&T Group♦	442	+1	...	14.1
50	33	Hansard Global‡	47⅞	-2½	...	16.5
1073	740¾	**Hargreaves Lansdown‡**	789¾	+9½	...	14.0
194⅞	143⅜	Helios Under♦	162½	-2½	...	...
647½	442⅛	**HSBC‡**	558	+9⅝	...	12.1
847½	648	IG Group	693½	-2	...	7.0
1036	500	Impax♦‡	784	+26	...	25.8
1829½	953⅛	Intermed Capital	1228	+37	...	7.0
114¾	64⅜	IPF	99½	-4⅞	...	5.5
173¾	136	International Public P'ship	146⅜	...	...	18.8
546⅜	351½	Investec	451	+11½	...	11.3
320	253	Investment Co	305	-5	...	10.9
96½	52¾	IP Group	54½	+⅜	...	2.0
242½	94	Jarvis Securities♦‡	130	-7½	...	9.3
213	83¾	Jupiter Fund Mgmt	135⅝	+3½	...	5.0
95⅜	55⅞	Just Group	84⅛	-⅞	...	...
664	368½	Lancashire Holdings	547½	+5	...	...
284¼	204	**Legal & Gen**	234⅜	+4⅜	...	7.2
...	...	Liberty Group	502⅝	-2⅝	...	...
1308	704	Liontrust	1062	+6	...	13.2
55¼	38	Livermore Invs♦	47½	...	...	3.0
53⅞	39	**Lloyds Banking Gp**	47⅜	+1⅜	...	6.5
36	25½	LMS Capital	25½	...	...	11.1
8582	6738	**Lond Stk Ex Gp**	7326	+120	...	74.9
227¼	159⅞	**M&G‡**	181⅝	-16¾	...	56.7
286¾	194¼	Man	237⅝	-7½	...	9.5
29	8	Manx Fin♦	23	-1½	...	11.6
3¼	1	Marechale Cap♦	1	...	...	0.5
15003⅝	12118¾	Marsh McLn	12816⅝	+94⅞	...	26.7
797½	530	Mattioli Woods♦‡	590	-5	...	...
21¾	7¾	Metal Tiger♦	7¾	-⅞	...	3.0
153⅛	69	Metro Bank	117¾	+2¾	...	-0.8
1866¼	1439⅝	Nat Aust Bk	1527¾	-26⅞	...	15.1
309⅞	212⅜	**NatWest‡**	261½	-⅛	...	10.3
295	170⅜	Numis♦	217	...	...	4.4
599	375⅜	Onesavings Bank	520	+44½	...	6.9
652	460	PayPoint	460	...	...	14.4
8½	¼	PCF Group♦	⅞	+¼	...	-0.4
684⅛	506¾	**Phoenix**	570	+7⅜	...	-6.6
321¾	136¼	Provident	225	...	...	4.2
1371½	797½	**Prudential**	1049½	+13½	...	17.0
2⅞	⅞	Quantum Blockchain♦	1⅝	...	...	-9.0
173¾	80¼	Quilter	80¼	-2⅛	...	57.4
160⅜	57½	Randall & Quilter♦	78⅜	-3	...	...
2220	1570	Rathbone Grp	1870	+14	...	14.4
1⅛	½	RiverFort Global Opps♦	⅝	...	...	2.0
1955	1370	Rockwood Strategic	1895	...	...	2.7
2510	1905	S & U	2285	+15	...	10.7
2	1⅛	Sancus Lending Grp♦	1⅛	...	...	-0.5
60¾	40¾	Schroder REIT	42½	-⅜	...	4.5
661⅜	358¾	**Schroders**	450⅞	+13⅞	...	2.0
1517½	920	**St James Place**	1176	+11½	...	22.4
790¾	471½	**Stand Chart‡**	650⅜	+7⅛	...	14.5
13½	7¼	Starvest♦	8½	...	...	-1.3
29	22½	STM Group♦	27½	...	...	10.5
4309⅜	3292½	Sun Life Can	3707½	+27½	...	9.4
10	5¼	Tavistock Inv♦	7⅛	...	...	1.1
2590	996	TBC Bank Group	2255	-45	...	6.6
16¾	6¾	Tern♦	6¾	-¼	...	5.0
25¾	15¼	Time Finance♦	24⅝	-½	...	15.0
1205	900	Volvere♦	1090	...	...	...
45	21	WH Ireland♦	21	...	...	11.8
33½	26	Walker Crips Grp	26	...	...	74.2
4482½	3142½	Wells Fargo	3248⅛	+40⅜	...	8.8
1369⅛	1065⅞	Westpac	1163⅝	-25¼	...	15.7
31	21½	Worsley Investors Ltd	30	...	...	93.7
41314½	34906¾	Zurich Fincl	36274⅝	+754¾	...	14.1

Investment companies

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Yld %	Dis(-) or Pm
1685	1042	**3i Group**	1519	+31	...	-8.4
368½	281½	3i Infrastructure	306½	+½	...	-4.4
103	81	Abrdn Div I&G	84½	+1½	...	-27.7
1428	1066	Aberforth Smlr	1226	-4	...	-12.5
1046	876	Alliance	953	+9	...	-6.9
461	352	Asia Dragon Tr	392	+4	...	-15.6
244	183½	Athelney Trust	195	...	...	-7.6
206½	171¾	AVI Global Trust	185½	+1¾	...	-10.5
348	206¼	Baillie Gifford Ch Gr	258	+1	...	-12.6
111⅛	73½	Baillie Gifford Eu Gr	92⅞	+2⅝	...	-13.6
860	657	Baillie Gifford Jpn Tr	742	+16	...	-11.4
179¾	131¼	Baillie Gifford SN	152	+1⅛	...	-11.3
191	139⅜	Baillie Gifford UK Gr	163½	+⅛	...	-12.9
110¾	90⅞	Bankers	100⅛	+1⅝	...	-9.6
5232	430	BH Macro	442	-12	...	9.1
1048	722¼	Biotech Growth	838	+4	...	-9.8
151	95	BlckRck Com Inc	124	+1¼	...	-3.2
144½	116½	BlckRck Fro Inv	133	+½	...	-5.6
568	396	BlckRck Grt Euro	502	+7¾	...	-5.8
206	164	BlckRck Inc & Gwth	191½	...	...	-4.1
457	330	BlckRck Latin Am	345	+7	...	-13.2
215	183¼	BlckRck SustAm	191	+¼	...	-3.4
1694⅝	1008	BlckRck Smlr	1308	+16	...	-13.1
767	477⅞	BlckRck Throgmorton	580	+5	...	-3.7
804⅞	524	BlckRck Wld Min	628	+3	...	-0.4
18¼	4½	Blue Plan Int Fn#	7¾	...	...	-17.6
325⅞	256	CT Cap&Inc	285	+½	...	-3.2
124⅛	68½	Balanced Comm Prop	83	-2	...	-28.3
162¾	122	The Glbl Smaller	142¾	+1½	...	-13.2
520	375½	CT Priv Eq Ord	460	-10	...	-33.7
101	61	CT Real Estate	61⅛	-3¾	...	-32.4
91¼	71	CT UK HIT	83	...	...	-4.3
92¾	79	CT UK HIT B	87½	...	...	1.3
356	294	CT UK HIT UNIT	335	...	...	-3.2
1335	1072½	Brown Advsr US Sm	1197½	+12½	...	-14.9
1115	888	Brunner	1035	+10	...	-11.0
4065	3015	Caledonia Inv	3450	+30	...	-31.4
184½	141	Invesco BondInc	166½	-1½	...	2.9
432	366½	City of Lon IT	401½	+½	...	2.7
122⅞	90	Crystal Amber Fd	95½	+3	...	-26.1
580	454	Dunedin Entp	542½	...	...	-14.3
690	537	Edinburgh IT	639	...	...	-6.5
230½	147¾	Edin Wwide	155	+2¾	...	-20.0
331⅜	268	EP Global Opp	324½	+2½	...	-11.1
118	74½	European Assets	90⅛	+1	...	-7.8
780	608	European Opp Tr	734	+9	...	-13.7
989	769	**F&C Invest Tr**	918	+12	...	-2.0
536	413½	Fidlty Asian Val	490	+4	...	-7.4
299⅜	181⅞	Fidelity China Sp	242	-½	...	-11.1
351	258½	Fidlty Euro Val	325	+6	...	-7.0
189½	143	Fidlty Jap Tru	169½	+1½	...	-14.8
298	232	Fidlty Spec Val	269	+3	...	-7.0
899⅜	731¾	Fins Gwth & Inc	855	+12	...	-5.2
120⅛	85⅝	GCP Infrastructure	93	...	...	-17.9
694⅞	552⅝	Gen Emer Mkts	585	+2⅛	...	-14.0
55	28½	Gldn Prosp Prc Mtl	32	...	...	-10.2
168½	130⅜	Greencoat UK Wind	160	+2⅜	...	-5.6
206⅜	166	Hansa Investment	176	+2½	...	-42.9
206⅜	167	Hansa Inv Co 'A'	171½	-4	...	-42.2
2663⅞	1986	Hbrvest Glbl Pt Eq	2025	+5	...	-48.6
165½	120½	Hend Euro Foc	149½	-½	...	-10.0
181	137¼	Hend High Inc	164	-1¼	...	-1.0
1020	674¼	Hend Smlr	815	+8	...	-9.9
1966	1540	Herald	1736	-4	...	-15.7
457½	310	HgCapital Trust	339½	+3	...	-26.5
184⅞	138⅞	HICL Infra	156	-¾	...	-5.2
270	216	Highbridge Tactical	249	+10	...	-9.3
1223¾	928	ICG Ent Tr	1088	+6	...	-41.6
486⅜	373⅛	Impax Env Mkts	420½	+7	...	-3.2
374	280	Invesco Asia Tr	337½	+½	...	-10.8
184½	141	Invesco BondInc	166½	-1½	...	2.9
164⅝	111	IPST Bal	138½	...	...	-8.9
258½	200	IPST Gbl Eq	243	-1	...	-6.1
101	92	IPST Managed	95¼	...	...	-12.1
189	141	IPST UK Eq	165	+½	...	-9.2
546	373½	IP UKSmallerCos	431	+12	...	-13.6
800	650	JPM American	698	+10	...	-4.2
408	294½	JPM Asia	359½	+1	...	-10.5
451½	246½	JPM Chinese	320	+1½	...	-9.9
748	624	JPM Claverhs	651	+2	...	-3.9
120⅜	91	JPM Em Mkts	105¾	+¾	...	-11.3
460½	339	JPM Euro disc	401	-3½	...	-14.3
142½	108	JPM GEMI	129	+½	...	-10.3
481	386	JPM GG&I	447½	+9	...	-0.2
898	719⅞	JPM Indian	778	+4	...	-18.8
384	301	JPM Jap Sml Co	324	+7	...	-11.9
528¾	408½	JPM Japan#	460½	+5½	...	-9.3
1122	735	JPM Mid Cap	874	+14	...	-13.6
104	85¼	JPM Multi-Ass G&I	92	+1¼	...	-6.1
-1.501	-3.503	ME & Africa Sec Plc"	03⅛	+110½	...	...
345	230	JPM Smllr Co	261	+3½	...	-13.2
255⅛	174	Keystone IT	206½	+1	...	-15.7
871	649	Law Debenture	791	+2	...	2.8
136½	99	Lowland	123	-1	...	-5.7
220¼	156¾	Majedie	208½	+½	...	-14.6
358	272⅛	M Currie Port	328	+9	...	-2.5
120	90	Marwyn Val In	97	...	...	-44.9
232½	158¼	Mercantile IT	196⅛	+2	...	-13.3
606	480	Merchants	556	+1	...	1.6
820	639¾	Mid Wynd	675	+4½	...	-2.4
1138	875	Monks Inv Tst	942½	+10½	...	-12.2
171	104⅛	Montanaro Eur Sml	133⅜	+2¼	...	-11.6
903½	715	Murray Income Trust	823	+1	...	-6.2
1376	1128	Murray Int	1306	+6	...	-0.4
88½	70¾	Nb Global Floating	74¼	-⅝	...	-7.2
384	303	Pacific Assets	354	+6	...	-9.2
325	229⅛	Pantheon Int	241	+3½	...	-48.3
3115	2295	**Pershing Sq**	2780	+20	...	-32.2
506	463¾	Personal Assets	478	+6	...	-0.7
2300	1697½	Polar Cap Tech	1952	+52	...	-15.3
202	133	Prem Glb & Inf	139	-1½	...	-16.1
148½	112½	Renewables Inf	124½	+3	...	-9.5
2680	1842	RIT Cap Ptnr	1888	-6	...	-22.1
750	530⅜	Riverstone	592	+14	...	-51.7
470	366½	Schroder TotRt	419½	+2	...	-5.9
552	446	Schrd Asia Pac	503	+6	...	-12.3
324	254½	Schrod Inc Gwth	292½	-1	...	0.6
218	187	Schrod Jap Gwth	206	+2½	...	-14.0
626	454	Schrod UKMid	558	+2	...	-10.0
26	12⅛	Schroder UK PP Tr	12⅛	-1	...	-52.7
536½	434	Scot American	496	+3	...	-2.6
1081¾	657⅝	**Scot Mtge**	682⅛	+7¾	...	-18.0
242	205	Secs Tst Scot	212½	+3	...	-2.5
103¾	75½	Sequoia Eco	82¼	...	...	-11.9
249½	195⅛	Temple Bar	224	-3	...	-4.8
166	130	Tplton Emg Mkt	146⅜	+1¾	...	-14.7
⅜	...	Tiger Royal and Inv♦	⅛	...	...	45.8
487½	263	TR Property	288	-9	...	-8.7
78	64⅜	Troy Inc&Gth	69	+½	...	-1.9
252	131	Utilico Ord	141	...	...	-35.7
227½	197½	Utilico Emerging Mkt	211	+2½	...	-14.3
772	500	Vietnam Ent Inv	570	-1	...	-15.7
237½	199¾	Witan	219	+2½	...	-9.6
3500	2820	Ww Health	3075	+10	...	-10.0



Construction & property

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Yld%	P/E
206	133	Alumasc♦‡	159	...	...	8.0
16¼	10½	Aseana Props	11½	...	...	-5.7
71¾	48⅝	Assura‡	49¾	-⅝	...	9.9
2¾	1⅜	Aukett Swanke♦	2¾	...	...	-3.9
371⅛	233	Balfour Beatty	335⅜	-12½	...	15.9
567⅜	323⅜	**Barratt Devs**	439	+10½	...	6.8
2955	1586½	Bellway	2068	+39	...	6.2
4457	3165	**Berkeley‡**	4045	+109	...	10.5
1558	987	Big Yellow Group	1200	...	...	7.9
400	181½	Billington Hldgs♦	400	...	...	32.5
345	218	Boot (Henry)	218	-1	...	11.6
543⅜	324¾	**Br Land**	399⅞	-7	...	54.7
160	120	Caledonian Tst♦	142½	...	...	28.4
64¾	43¾	Cap & Regnl	56	-1½	...	-0.4
2550	2100	Cardiff Prop	2400	...	...	26.1
26	4¼	Carecapital♦	4¼	-¼	...	-0.5
170	106	Clarke T	132¼	-5¾	...	9.5
294⅛	191⅝	Countryside Prop	229¾	+14	...	16.7
29⅜	6¼	Craven House♦	16⅞	...	...	-0.3
4353	2756½	**CRH‡**	4001½	+48½	...	16.6
3308	1876	Derwent London	2388	-78	...	10.6
4	3	Dolphin Capital♦	3¾	...	...	-2.6
36½	22	First Prop♦‡	24½	...	...	...
52½	37½	Fletcher King♦	40	...	...	...
46⅝	27¼	Foxtons Group	40	+⅝	...	...
187¾	145	Galliford Try‡	168⅜	-1⅜	...	37.4
538	252½	Genuit Group	266	+10	...	16.1
670	335	Gleeson (MJ)‡	402	+10	...	6.2
1054	630½	Grafton	862	-3⅛	...	9.9
312¾	205⅜	Grainger	238⅛	-2¾	...	14.8
729	409⅛	Great Portland	522	-6½	...	-6.5
34⅜	17⅛	Hammerson	23⅝	-¾	...	-2.5
185	101	Harworth Gp	114	-2	...	3.9
630	450	Heath (Samuel)♦‡	450	...	...	9.3
442	296½	Helical PLC	322½	-1½	...	7.7
1065	890	Highcroft Invs	890	-35	...	3.8
208⅛	148¼	Ibstock	178	+3	...	23.1
258	176	James Halstead♦	191	+7½	...	20.3
854	591	Keller	670	+10	...	7.7
8366⅛	3982½	Kingspan Group	5515½	+224⅜	...	21.6
806⅜	485¼	**Land Sec‡**	615¾	-3	...	...
103	65½	Life Science Reit	67	+⅜	...	...
25	16	Lon & Assoc	16	-1½	...	-2.1
280⅜	161¾	Londonmetric Property‡	174⅛	-2	...	3.7
59	37	Macau Prop Op	57¼	-½	...	-7.4
689⅜	225⅜	Marshalls	301¾	+8	...	11.0
128	74	Michelmersh♦	93½	-½	...	14.9
2480	1392	Morgan Sindall	1666	+30	...	8.1
13900	11100	Mountview‡	11100	+200	...	13.8
99½	68¼	NewRiver REIT	85⅛	-1¼	...	-2.9
297	195	Palace Capital	212	-2	...	10.1
335	275	Panther Securities♦	285	...	...	2.5
2302	1138½	**Persimmon**	1247	+32½	...	5.0
6¼	2¼	Pires Investments♦	2¼	...	...	-5.0
65	45	Plaza Cent	45	...	...	-0.1
151⅝	98⅝	Primary Health Properties	104¾	-1½	...	10.6
40½	28¼	Real Estate Invs♦	29	...	...	3.8
585	372½	Redrow‡	451⅜	+5½	...	5.6
1398	794	Safestore‡	982	+16½	...	5.5
1229	763½	Savills	967	-31	...	9.6
6¼	5⅝	Secure Property♦	5⅝	...	...	14.8
1389	694	**Segro‡**	755⅛	-27⅜	...	2.2
44⅝	27¾	SIG	39½	+⅛	...	...
86	37⅜	SigmaRoc♦	54⅜	+¾	...	...
129⅛	66½	Sirius Real Estate	76⅛	-1½	...	5.9
173½	160½	Smart (J)	173½	...	...	4.7
50	27	Steppe Cement♦	43½	+½	...	10.0
145¾	85	**Taylor Wimpey**	116	+2½	...	7.6
178½	129	Town Centre	146	+2	...	5.7
1358½	738	Travis Perkins	950⅛	+26⅜	...	9.2
248½	125⅝	Tritax Big Box Reit‡	137¼	-⅜	...	2.4
108⅜	58⅜	Tritax Eurobox	65	-½	...	...
344	184½	Tyman	234½	+5½	...	9.2
1207	791½	**Unite**	934½	-6	...	10.9
1063	519½	Vistry Group	756	+13½	...	6.6
176⅛	100	Warehouse REIT‡	100	-1½	...	2.3
722	343⅜	Workspace Grp	464⅜	-6⅛	...	-6.9
755	635	Wynnstay Props♦	635	...	...	4.6

Consumer goods

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Yld%	P/E
6¾	2⅛	Agriterra♦	2⅝	...	...	-0.3
39½	25½	Airea♦	38	...	...	14.0
952	726	Anglo-Eastern	780	-16	...	7.1
340	147½	Animalcare♦	147½	-1	...	...
2052	1237	**AB Foods**	1949½	+49½	...	32.2
121	79	Bakkavor Group	107	-1	...	11.1
588	432	Barr (AG)	543	+19	...	19.2
4½	1½	Bidstack Group♦	1⅞	...	...	-1.5
107½	24½	Brand Architekts♦	27½	...	...	-1.1
3628	2968½	**Brit Amer Tob**	2968½	+8½	...	10.0
863½	707½	Britvic	860½	+31½	...	19.5
2592	1482	**Burberry**	2285	+36	...	19.6
216⅜	143⅞	C&C Grp	145	+4	...	-8.6
8½	2⅛	Capital Metals♦	4⅝	...	...	-1.2
156	92	Carr's Grp#	121½	-3	...	15.0
615	363	Character Grp♦	370	+2½	...	6.6
1525	1070	Churchill China♦	1235	-15	...	...
2180	1548	**Coca Cola HBC**	2132	+59	...	17.0
880	595	Colefax♦‡	800	...	...	14.1
3748	2586	Cranswick	3012	+48	...	15.9
328½	164	Devro	328	+½	...	17.8
4020½	3372½	**Diageo‡**	3534½	+85	...	27.1
1¾	⅜	Distil♦	⅜	...	...	11.8
1085	784	Evans (M.P.)♦	828	-6	...	7.1
103	66½	Finsbury Food♦	97½	...	...	11.6
9515	5690	Games Workshop	8660	+145	...	23.8
1164⅝	861⅜	Glanbia	1160½	+13½	...	28.6
135⅞	60¾	Greencore	81¼	+2¼	...	16.2
398	231	Headlam	302	-6	...	13.0
1250	500	Hilton Food	724	+3	...	15.1
36	24	Hornby♦	24	...	...	...
2185	1526½	**Imperial Brands‡**	1862½	-21½	...	6.2
1⅝	1¼	J Lewis Hford♦	1⅜	...	...	8.7
9650⅛	7402⅜	Kerry Gp	8090⅛	+301⅝	...	22.4
46⅝	15½	McBride	26	...	...	-4.6
310	205	Mulberry Group♦	215	...	...	8.9
1460	986½	Nichols♦	1055	-25	...	...
270	165	Norcros	192	+2	...	6.0
388⅛	302	Origin Ents♦	372⅝	-8¾	...	11.7
66½	37½	Pittards♦	37½	...	...	17.6
620	300	Portmeirion♦	345	-7½	...	14.6
1	⅝	Provexis♦	⅞	...	...	0.4
221	180⅜	PZ Cussons‡	180⅜	+3⅜	...	20.8
200½	98½	REA	105	-3	...	-8.2
2⅜	1	Real Gd Fd♦	1⅛	...	...	0.1
505	235	Tandem♦	277½	+2½	...	3.9
1158	507	Treatt‡	567	+41	...	22.7
3¼	1¾	Ukrproduct Gp♦	2	-1¼	...	-1.3
4876½	4010	Unilever (NV)	4661½	+45½	...	23.9
4267½	3364½	**Unilever‡**	4087	+46½	...	20.9
926	317	Victoria♦	560	-4	...	...

Engineering

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Yld%	P/E
...	...	Ass Br Eng#	15	...	...	-3.5
1381	739	Avon Rubber	919½	+38	...	...
367½	268½	Babcock	308⅜	-⅜	...	-1.9
919½	706	**BAE**	916¾	+5⅛	...	16.7
2150	1600	Braime A N/V♦	2100	...	...	23.6
1750	1480	Braime Group♦	1700	-50	...	19.1
602½	500	Caffyns	550	...	...	7.9
5¾	1⅝	Cap XX Ld♦	1⅝	...	...	-3.6
380	279	Castings	344	-8	...	16.6
5	3⅜	Chamberlin♦	3½	...	...	-0.2
42½	14	Checkit♦	29½	...	...	-3.6
560	391	Cohort♦	489	-½	...	43.4
400	166	Crestchic Plc♦	399	...	...	...
1425	1020⅜	Dewhurst♦	1100	...	...	12.6
371	200	Dialight	200	-2	...	...
1296⅞	898⅛	Electrolux 'B'	925⅝	+6⅜	...	7.0
182½	85½	Feedback♦	169	-3	...	...
1035	426	Gooch Hsego♦	470	-5	...	34.8
3930	2400	Goodwin	3645	+15	...	20.1
2578	1876½	**Halma**	2091	+44	...	30.2
1548	893	Hill & Smith	1312	+14	...	30.8
125	71½	Holders Tech♦	82½	+1	...	5.0
2¾	¾	Image Scan♦	1⅞	...	...	11.1
1625	1071	IMI	1469	+28	...	20.0
...	...	Inspirit Energy♦	...	...	...	...
9600	6300	Judges Scientific♦	9180	-120	...	46.3
84	71½	LPA♦	79½	...	...	...
798¾	754⅛	Meggitt	798¾	+⅛	...	...
165¾	95½	**Melrose‡**	152⅛	+3⅞	...	...
325	217	Morgan Advanced	287½	+3½	...	12.1
535	227½	Mpac♦	290	...	...	7.6
745	237	MS Intl♦	550	...	...	78.5
2625	1720	Oxford Inst	2500	+25	...	34.1
2581¾	1076⅝	Philips El nv	1349⅛	+32½	...	23.9
36½	12¾	PipeHawk♦	13¼	-½	...	28.1
101½	23⅛	Pressure Tech♦	41¼	-⅝	...	-3.4
4338	3342	Renishaw‡	4156	+130	...	23.7
29	20	Renold♦	26⅝	+⅞	...	9.5
156¾	66⅛	**Rolls-Royce**	146¼	+2⅛	...	99.5
1¾	1	Ross Gp	1	...	...	-2.5
337½	229½	Rotork	304¾	+6½	...	33.1
200	144	SDI Group♦	168½	-3½	...	27.8
173⅜	111	Senior	154½	-⅛	...	26.9
70⅛	48	Severfield	60	-⅜	...	10.7
16¼	8	Six Hundred♦	8½	+¼	...	49.7
1691⅛	1135¼	SKF B	1520	+11¾	...	11.2
300	175	Slingsby (HC)♦	300	+30	...	4.9
1797½	1364	**Smiths**	1692½	+37	...	26.9
1435	976⅝	Solid State♦	1227½	-32½	...	29.5
540	360	Somero Enter♦	395	+17½	...	8.7
3644	2474	Spectris	3469	+65	...	11.4
13070	9130	**Spirax-Sarco**	11185	+220	...	35.2
57½	34¼	Surface Trsfms♦	34¼	-¼	...	...
3½	1½	Tanfield♦	3⅛	...	...	-9.0
472	345	Thorpe FW♦	377	+12	...	26.2
2⅝	⅝	TP Group♦	2⅛	...	...	-3.3
95½	48½	Transense Tech♦	87½	...	...	64.3
3500	3070	Ultra Electrncs	3500	+6	...	37.4
435	284½	Vesuvius	398	+7¾	...	10.6
1530	861	Videndum	861	-19	...	15.8
323½	210	Volex♦	210	+5	...	11.4
2021	1328½	**Weir**	1742	+13	...	29.4
3935	1464	XP Power	2105	-10	...	11.2
182½	111¼	Zytronic♦	140	+2½	...	46.6

Health

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Yld%	P/E
1475	1049	Abcam♦	1226	+123	...	...
316	234½	AdvancedMedical♦	240	-5½	...	37.7
26	5	Allergy Therap♦#	6¼	+1¼	...	-7.3
156	22¾	Angle♦	22¾	...	...	-3.1
603	322½	Anpario♦	322½	...	...	16.9
11802	9219	**AstraZeneca‡**	10798	+154	...	...
40¾	29	Circassia Group♦	34	...	...	34.0
248½	176¼	**Convatec**	229⅜	+6¾	...	53.5
65	25⅜	Creighton	32½	-2	...	6.2
4272	2520	Dechra Pharma‡	2580	+36	...	38.5
1¼	¾	Deltex Medical♦	1⅛	...	...	-6.7
26⅞	14½	e-Therapeutics♦	14¾	...	...	...
167½	82½	Eco Animal Hlth♦	107	-½	...	12.9
54⅜	26	EKF Diagnostics♦	26	-⅝	...	7.3
56⅞	24⅝	Futura Medical♦	49⅛	+¼	...	...
3272	2234	Genus‡	2930	+66	...	52.1
1828½	1296	**GSK**	1387	+5½	...	16.0
¾	⅜	Gunsynd♦	⅜	...	...	3.6
335¾	246⅛	**Haleon‡**	322⅜	+3⅞	...	...
2122	1190½	Hikma Pharms	1741½	+2½	...	13.0
335	134½	Hutchmed China♦	249½	+3½	...	...
...	...	Immunodiag Sys♦	378	...	...	...
7¾	1½	ImmuPharma♦	2⅛	+¼	...	-0.6
7025	1344	Indivior	1392	+3	...	79.6
112½	47½	Inspiration Health♦	49½	+1	...	7.6
44½	23	IXICO♦	23	+¼	...	7.3
501½	337¾	Mediclinic	499	+½	...	31.1

Equity prices Business

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Yld%	P/E
3¾	1½	N4 Pharma♦	1¾	...	...	-2.1
7870½	6630	Novartis	6836½	+ 134½	...	8.7
5⅝	2¾	Omega Diags♦	3¼	...	...	-1.2
14	4¾	Ovoca Bio♦	6	...	...	-1.7
699	297	Oxford Biomedica	480	− 2	...	21.5
5	2	Physiomics♦	4⅛	...	...	...
5	3¼	Proteome Scies♦	3¾	...	...	...
6808	5450	**Reckitt Benckiser**	5882	+ 86	...	...
63½	31⅜	RUA Life Sciences♦	54	− 1½	...	-5.2
295	70	Sareum Hldgs♦	97½	...	...	...
1321½	984½	**Smith & Neph**	1174½	− 4½	...	26.6
250	206	Spire Hcare	213	+ 2	...	...
35	9⅝	Synairgen♦	9¾	...	...	-0.4
⅝	¼	Tissue Regenix♦	½	...	...	-7.5
47½	17¼	Totally♦	17¼	...	...	27.5
420	292	Tristel♦‡	331½	+ 1½	...	68.3
34¾	9¼	ValiRx♦	9¼	...	...	...

Industrials

High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Yld%	P/E
148	54⅜	Accsys Tech♦	66¾	+ 2¾	...	...
4908	3447⅜	BASF	3953⅜	+ 48½	...	7.8
6010½	4207½	Bayer DM50	4890½	+ 1¾	...	57.1
235	46½	Biome Tech♦	84½	− 1	...	-2.8
3⅝	1⅜	Byotrol♦	1⅝	...	...	...
7	6¼	Camb Gbl Timber♦	6¾	...	...	-9.0
81⅛	50⅞	Coats Grp	78½	+ ½	...	17.5
8028	5908	**Croda**	6424	+ 176	...	27.9
1250	640	Cropper (James)♦	645	− 20	...	19.6
129	87⅝	Elementis	116⅝	+ 2⅝	...	...
33½	11½	Hardide♦	11½	...	...	-2.2
2373	1784	**Johnson Math**	1969	+ 28	...	24.8
1705	1302	**Mondi**	1302	+ 15	...	9.9
100	75	Robinson♦	97½	...	...	...
368½	241¾	**DS Smith**	307⅝	+ 3	...	17.4
772⅛	443⅝	Swire Pacific	628⅝	− 7⅛	...	...
21½	9½	Symph Environ♦	9½	− ¼	...	...
332¾	88	Synthomer	134⅝	+ 5¼	...	2.8
2711½	2088¾	Takeda Pharm	2657¾	− 42¾	...	14.9
7	3⅝	Velocys♦	3⅝	+ ⅜	...	-4.5
1944	1545	Victrex	1666	+ 42	...	19.8
651	495	Wynnstay Group♦	495	− 5	...	11.3
410	233	Zotefoams	348½	+ 6	...	20.9

Leisure

High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Yld%	P/E
224⅛	64	888 Hldgs	64	+ 1⅛	...	4.7
850	542	Accesso Tech♦	694	+ 8	...	18.2
680	370	Best of the Best♦	530	− 10	...	5.9
1396½	501⅜	Carnival	657⅜	+ 21	...	-1.0
140	99	Celtic♦	111½	...	...	11.0
38	1⅞	Cineworld	2⅜	...	...	...
384½	215⅛	Domino's Pizza	272	+ 1⅜	...	13.8
1722½	1075½	**Entain**‡	1213½	+ 19½	...	27.1
14250	7614	**Flutter Ent**	13830	+ 480	...	...
33⅜	22	Gaming Realms♦	26⅝	...	...	...
290	290	Heavitree♦‡	290	...	...	17.4
185	100	Heavitree A♦‡	100	...	...	6.0
145	120	Hermes Pacific♦	120	...	...	...
5784	4193	**InterContinental Hotels**	5352	+ 136	...	50.1
1½	⅞	Minoan Gp♦	1	...	...	-7.4
243⅜	102	Mitch & Butlers	155	+ 3½	...	...
250	92½	On The Beach	146½	...	...	-7.7
1600	1020	PPHE Hotels	1195	− 25	...	-9.7
145⅝	52⅝	Rank Grp	72	− 2	...	9.7
78⅝	26⅝	Restaurant Gp	38⅝	+ ⅞	...	-7.3
50½	21½	Rotala♦	48½	+ ½	...	...
37¼	15½	Sportech♦	19½	...	...	...
277⅞	184⅝	SSP	246	...	...	-4.8
5¾	3	Tasty♦	3	− ¼	...	4.0
295	65	Tintra♦	125	− 5	...	-2.2
2493	1054½	Tui	1471	− 2	...	...
3⅜	1⅜	Webis Holdings♦	2¼	...	...	...
842	389⅝	Wetherspoon JD	583½	+ 6½	...	-5.4
3151	2853	**Whitbread**	2871	+ 60	...	...
1470	870	Young & Co - A♦	1096	+ 12	...	...
818	564	Young & Co - N/V♦	760	+ 5	...	...

Media

High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Yld%	P/E
⅝	⅛	7digital Gp♦	⅝	...	...	-5.7
87½	52½	Aeorema Comms♦	69	...	...	19.0
43½	20½	Altitude Group♦	41½	− ½	...	...
85½	70½	Arcontech Grp♦	82½	+ ½	...	11.4
350¾	176⅛	Ascential	261⅞	+ 5⅞	...	...
684⅜	486⅛	**Auto Trader**	589⅜	+ 12	...	29.0
492	340	Bloomsbury Pub	453	+ 6	...	18.6
8⅞	3¾	Bonhill Group♦	5½	+ ¼	...	...
172½	52	Catalyst Media♦	157½	...	...	...
⅜	⅜	Catenae♦	⅜	...	...	-0.3
...	...	Daily Mail‡	270	− 2½	...	10.3
195	100	DCD Media♦#	100	− 30	...	5.0
71½	43	Ebiquity♦	52½	...	...	...
1466	868	Euromoney In Inv	1460	+ 2	...	...
2770	1113	Future	1113	+ 5	...	19.1
1400	930	GlobalData♦	1260	+ 15	...	62.3
110¾	50	Hyve Group	110⅜	+ ⅛	...	...
184	46½	IG Design Grp♦	172	+ 3½	...	25.2
693¾	501¾	**Informa**	678⅜	+ 22	...	...
90	55⅛	ITV	81⅜	+ ⅞	...	8.7
10¾	4½	Jaywing♦	4¾	...	...	...
12¼	1¾	Live Company Gp♦	2	...	...	-0.4
...	...	Mediazest♦	...	...	...	-6.0
47½	28½	Merit Grp♦	28½	...	...	-8.4
57½	21½	Mirada♦	21½	...	...	-0.9
68½	42	Mission Group♦	53	...	...	8.9
244	167	Moneysupermarket	234	+ 1½	...	23.8
1927⅜	1255⅞	News Corp A	1328⅜	+ 14	...	21.6
1948⅜	1282	News Corp B	1338⅜	+ 18⅛	...	21.8
1458	755	Next 15 Comms♦	928	+ 20	...	...
995⅛	649⅞	**Pearson**	838	+ 5⅛	...	40.1
107	61	Photo-Me	107	+ 5	...	18.6
4⅜	2	Primorus Inv♦	3⅜	...	...	6.7
187½	108½	Quarto	162½	...	...	9.0
199	67	Reach	75⅛	+ ⅛	...	83.5
1⅞	⅜	REACT Grp♦	1	...	...	15.3
2555	2081	**Relx**	2543	+ 31	...	33.5
679⅜	445⅜	**Rightmove**	549⅜	+ 9½	...	31.1
150	65	SpaceandPeople♦	70½	− 1	...	...
332	247	STV Group	252	− 8½	...	6.1
310	122½	System1 Group♦	155	− 17½	...	7.4
3460⅞	2365⅛	21st Cent Fox Inc A	2718	+ 33	...	14.9
3175⅛	2230⅛	21st Cent Fox Inc B	2495⅞	+ 33	...	13.6
...	...	Vela Tech♦	...	...	...	5.3
356	222	Wilmington‡	296	− 2	...	18.8
1078½	725⅜	**WPP**	939½	+ 18⅛	...	17.9
123½	77½	Zinc Media♦	87½	...	...	-5.5

Natural resources

High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Yld%	P/E
1	⅜	ADM Energy♦	⅝	...	...	...
¼	...	Advance Energy♦#	⅛	...	...	-0.1
41⅜	17⅜	AFC Energy♦	20½	− ⅜	...	...
...	...	Afentra PLC	...	...	...	...
⅜	...	Alba Mineral Res♦	...	...	...	-2.2
⅞	⅜	Alien Metals♦	⅜	...	...	...
113⅜	67⅜	Alumina	77⅜	− 1¼	...	16.1
1¼	⅝	Aminex	1	...	...	-6.4
2	⅝	Amur Mins Corp♦	1⅝	...	...	...
9896⅞	4262¾	Anglo Amer Plat	4262¾	− 63⅜	...	3.0
4170½	2479	**Anglo American**‡	2479	− 80½	...	4.9
118	64	Anglo Asian Mng♦	107	+ 7	...	9.2
1805	991½	**Antofagasta**	1454	+ 8½	...	15.0
5¼	2⅜	Arc Minerals♦	3⅜	...	...	2.4
4¾	2½	Ariana Res♦	2⅝	...	...	3.8
¾	⅜	Arkle Resources♦	½	...	...	-1.9
4½	1⅜	Armadale Cap♦	1½	...	...	...
2¼	⅞	Asiamet Rsrcs♦	1⅜	...	...	...
410	188	Atalaya Mine♦	330	...	...	4.1
¼	...	Baron Oil♦	⅛	...	...	...
15¼	2	Beowulf Mining♦	2⅝	...	...	-9.5
⅜	...	Bezant Res♦	...	...	...	-1.2
3019	2034	BHP Group‡	2355	− 33	...	10.3
6⅞	1½	Border & Sthn Pet♦	3	...	...	...
44⅜	14⅜	Bougainville	18⅝	− ¼	...	...
4¾	1¼	BowLeven♦	1½	...	...	-1.7
567½	356½	**BP**‡	482⅝	− 4¼	...	17.5
19¼	8¼	Cadence Min♦	11	+ ¼	...	1.1
3½	1⅝	Cadogan Petrol	2⅝	...	...	29.8
1250	825	Caledonia Mining♦	1110	...	...	10.8
261¾	191	Capricorn Energy	236½	− 3½	...	1.8
8⅞	2¼	Caspian Sunrise♦‡	6⅝	...	...	...
125½	74⅜	Centamin	100½	− 6½	...	15.5
292½	206½	Cent Asia Metals♦	250½	− 3	...	7.3
19½	9⅝	Chaarat Gold♦#	10⅜	...	...	...
23⅞	9⅝	Chariot Oil & Gas♦	13⅝	− ¼	...	...
6½	1¼	China Nonferr Gold♦	1½	...	...	...
⅝	...	Clontarf Energy♦	⅛	...	...	-3.0
35¾	15¼	Condor Gld♦	23	− 1	...	...
1⅝	⅝	Corcel♦	¾	...	...	-0.3
6964½	60⅜	DRD Gold	60⅜	− 3⅜	...	7.1
1⅜	⅝	ECR Minerals♦	⅝	...	...	-3.9
22	6⅞	Edenville Energy♦	6⅞	...	...	-0.4
11¾	⅝	Empyrean Energy♦	1¼	...	...	-8.8
2068	1461	**Endeavour**‡	1718	− 29	...	25.5
36½	17⅝	EnQuest	17⅞	+ ⅝	...	1.1
13½	3½	Eurasia Mining♦	3⅞	− ⅝	...	...
3	⅞	Europa Oil&Gas♦	1⅛	...	...	11.1
195¾	97½	Ferrexpo	118⅝	− 3¾	...	0.9
968	644	**Fresnillo**	697¾	− 39¾	...	16.5
...	...	G3 Exploration#	28	...	...	-2.6
41½	19½	Galantas Gold♦	19½	− 2	...	-3.3
7¼	3	GCM Resources♦	3	− ⅛	...	-2.6
72⅞	26⅛	Gem Diamonds	26⅛	− 1¼	...	2.7
32⅛	12⅞	Getech♦	13⅞	...	...	-3.2
578	400	**Glencore**	423¼	+ 11⅞	...	15.4
⅝	¼	Global Petrol♦	¼	...	...	-3.1
1150487⅞	897⅞	Gold Fields	897⅞	+ 9⅞	...	13.8
12½	6⅛	Goldplat♦	8⅛	− ¾	...	6.3
10⅜	2⅝	Goldstone Res♦	2⅝	...	...	...
15⅞	7⅛	Greatld Gld♦	7⅛	...	...	...
120½	70	Griffin Mining♦	75¼	− ½	...	8.3
310	170½	Gulf Keystone	170½	− ⅝	...	10.6
25⅞	5⅝	Harland & Wolff Gp♦	13⅜	− ⅛	...	1.1
147⅛	51½	Hochschild	65	− 2⅞	...	6.2
173	85	Horizonte Minrls♦	141	− 2	...	...
356½	187½	Hunting PLC	231	+ 1	...	-5.8
106½	15⅜	IGas Energy♦	18	...	...	-0.9
½	...	Independ Res♦	...	...	...	...
317	224	Indus Gas♦	224	...	...	23.2
1	¼	Ironveld♦	¼	...	...	-4.7
402⅞	79⅞	ITM Power♦	82½	+ 2	...	...
17	8	Jubilee Metals♦	8	...	...	6.6
3¼	1⅜	Karel Diamd Res♦	2	...	...	-8.3
1¼	⅜	KEFI Gold and Copper♦	⅜	...	...	-3.2
526	380⅛	Kenmare Res	450	− 2	...	5.2
34⅝	5⅜	Lamprell#	8⅞	...	...	-0.7
24½	11⅞	Landore Res♦	14⅝	...	...	-3.3
⅝	⅜	Lansdowne O&G♦	⅜	...	...	...
18½	12⅜	Leeds Group♦	12½	− ½	...	-2.0
6⅞	1⅞	Lexington Gold♦	5	+ ⅜	...	...
21½	2⅝	MC Mining♦	8¼	− 1⅜	...	-1.7
1⅜	¾	Metals Explorn♦	1½	...	...	2.7
⅝	⅜	Nostra Terra♦	⅜	...	...	-1.3
26½	⅞	Nostrum O&G	14½	− ⅜	...	-0.1
...	...	Oil Search	218⅞	− 5⅜	...	60.3
¾	⅝	Oilex♦#	⅜	...	...	-3.7
¼	...	Oriole Resources♦	⅛	...	...	-1.3
⅞	½	Ormonde Mining♦#	⅜	...	...	-3.1
17⅛	5⅜	Orosur Mining♦	7⅛	...	...	...
24	13⅜	Pan African Res♦	14⅛	− ⅜	...	4.6
149½	23½	Pantheon Res♦	25	+ ⅞	...	...
79	38⅜	Parkmead Grp♦	38⅛	− 1⅜	...	-3.2
⅝	⅜	Pathfinder Mins♦	⅜	...	...	-3.5
134	73	Petra Diamonds	73	...	...	2.4
4	1⅜	Petrel Resources♦	1⅜	...	...	-6.6
5⅜	1⅜	Petro Matad♦	3⅞	...	...	...
157⅞	61⅜	Petrofac	61⅛	− 2½	...	-1.5
1⅜	½	Petroneft Res♦	⅝	...	...	-1.2
4⅜	⅞	Petropavlovsk#	1⅜	− ⅜	...	1.6
7½	3⅜	Phoenix Global♦	6½	+ ⅛	...	-1.6
5⅛	1⅝	Plexus Holdings♦	3⅞	...	...	-0.8
350	121	Polymetal Intl	218	− 2	...	...
698	499	Porvair	619	− 5	...	23.8
19¼	3⅝	Prospex Energy♦	11½	...	...	...
18½	8½	Proton Motor Power S♦	10¼	− ¾	...	-1.9
4	1⅜	Providence Res♦	3⅛	...	...	29.0
2⅜	1	Quadrise Fuels Intl♦	1½	...	...	-5.7
30⅜	3⅜	Rambler Met&Min♦#	5⅜	+ ¼	...	0.1
⅜	⅜	Reabold Resources♦	⅜	...	...	-3.6
⅝	¼	Red Rock Res♦	¼	...	...	-1.5
7133⅝	4875⅝	Rio Tinto Ltd	6300⅝	− 264⅝	...	6.5
6377	4486	**Rio Tinto**‡	5281	− 53	...	5.5
41½	21⅜	San Leon Energy♦	21¼	+ ⅛	...	7.9
⅝	⅜	Scirocco Energy♦	⅜	...	...	...
59	22⅜	Serabi Gold♦	30	...	...	4.1
450	208½	Serica Energy♦	208½	− 2½	...	...
12½	8½	Shanta Gold♦	11⅛	+ ⅜	...	7.0
2604½	1903½	**Shell**‡	2209	− 50½	...	11.6
2⅞	⅞	Sound Energy♦	1⅝	...	...	10.3
⅜	...	Sunrise Resources♦	⅛	...	...	...
¼	...	Tertiary Minerals♦	⅛	...	...	-3.8
⅞	⅛	Thor Mining♦	¼	...	...	-1.7
5430½	3937½	Total Eng SE	4674¼	− 57	...	10.6
¼	⅛	Tower Resources♦	⅛	...	...	-2.9
61	29	Tullow Oil	29	− ⅜	...	2.9
⅛	...	UK Oil & Gas♦	...	...	...	-2.0
460	143	URU Metals♦	150	+ 15	...	4.8
1⅞	⅛	Vast Res♦	½	...	...	-0.1
4	3⅜	Victoria Oil&Gas♦#	3⅞	...	...	-1.8
3⅛	2½	W Resources♦#	2⅝	...	...	-0.3
6	2⅝	Westmount Engy♦	2⅝	− ⅛	...	-0.5
251⅝	104½	Wood Grp (J)	202⅝	+ ⅞	...	-8.3
8	1⅜	Woodbois♦	1⅛	...	...	4.5
6⅞	1⅜	Xtract Resources♦	1⅜	...	...	-2.5
7⅝	4	Zephyr Energy♦	4⅛	...	...	-6.0

Professional & support services

High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Yld%	P/E
4790	2240	4imprint Grp	4790	+ 250	...	80.8
555	457	Andrews Sykes♦	535	− 7½	...	17.1
5874	3359	**Ashtead**	4939	− 32	...	24.0
29½	1½	Asimilar Group♦	2½	...	...	0.1
145	58	AssetCo♦	63½	+ ½	...	0.3
53½	36	Avisen♦	47½	...	...	...
148	106	Begbies Traynor♦	125	+ 1⅜	...	...
228	155	Blancco Tech♦	190	...	...	68.1
3163	2575	**Bunzl**	3001	+ 74	...	22.7
42⅝	20⅞	Capita	36½	+ 2⅝	...	2.7
45	39½	CEPS♦	39½	...	...	-8.9
130	100	Christie Group♦	114	...	...	48.5
1969½	1576½	**Compass**	1926½	+ 52½	...	46.8
280	97	CPPGroup♦	225	− 15	...	...
84½	49½	Croma Security♦	49½	...	...	7.1
6268	4030	**DCC**	4288	+ 56	...	14.1
115½	56	De La Rue	56	− 3	...	7.3
2970	2158	Diploma	2636	+ 52	...	47.1
914	597	Discoverie	750	− 5	...	61.4
40½	23½	Driver Group♦‡	29	...	...	13.8
335	175⅜	Essentra	211½	− 1½	...	23.7
3160	2285	**Experian**	2653	+ 24	...	34.0
12380	8680	Ferguson‡	10655	+ 45	...	15.7
264	215	FIH Group♦	264	...	...	...
11	5¼	Grafenia♦	9	− ¾	...	-6.6
610	317	Hargeaves Serv♦	410	+ 8	...	4.2
735	413	Impellam Grp♦‡	657½	− 55	...	35.9
28⅛	4	Ince G♦#	5⅛	+ ⅛	...	2.9
5344	3619	**Intertek**	4020	+ 70	...	22.6
272⅝	115⅜	IWG	161⅞	+ ⅜	...	-6.1
122	77	Johnson Srvce♦	118	+ 2	...	73.7
141	99	Journeo♦	139	...	...	31.1
89	56½	Kier Gp	67½	+ ¾	...	6.5
1400	1080	Latham (J)♦	1215	...	...	6.6
1080	695	Lok'n Store♦	830	+ 16	...	25.1
3850	2300	Lon Security♦	3050	...	...	16.8
403	220	LSL Prop Services	262	− 4	...	7.3
131	86	Macfarlane	104½	...	...	12.1
335	102½	Maintel Hldgs♦	122½	...	...	3.7
2300	8¼	Malvern Intl♦	12⅜	...	...	...
224	182	Mears Group	199	+ 3	...	17.3
608	512	Menzies (John)	607	− 1	...	48.0
83⅞	49½	Mitie Gp	79⅛	+ 1⅛	...	39.6
13¾	3⅜	MobilityOne♦	9	...	...	6.6
53½	25	Newmark Sec♦	51	− ½	...	...
7¼	3½	Norm Broadbent♦	5⅛	...	...	-9.9
64½	40	Northern Bear♦	40	− ½	...	4.0
286	198	NWF Grp♦‡	274	+ 4	...	...
519½	362⅜	PageGroup	444	+ 4⅛	...	12.0
73	47½	PCI-PAL♦	50	+ 4	...	...
13	8¼	Petards♦	10½	...	...	19.0
26½	13	PHSC♦	13	− 1½	...	23.6
3⅝	⅞	PowerHouse Egy♦	1	...	...	-1.8
98	61	Record	86	− 2½	...	23.6
439½	283½	Redde Northgate	353	− 2½	...	8.8
750	555	Renew Hldgs♦	686	+ 4	...	16.9
851	489	Renewi	633	+ 17	...	13.3
562¾	445	**Rentokil**	553½	+ 50½	...	39.2
472	295	Restore♦	320	+ 9	...	38.1
581	331½	Ricardo‡	550	...	...	49.1
700	440	Robert Walters	528	+ 12	...	12.0
20	11½	Roebuck Food Grp♦	19	...	...	2.9
239	95⅜	RPS Group	221	− 1	...	...
1159	812	**RS Group**	910½	+ 15	...	23.1
35	16½	RTC Group♦	18	− 1	...	...
474⅜	264⅜	RWS Hldgs♦	331	+ 2⅝	...	30.3
440	365	Science Group♦	403	...	...	18.5
188¼	129¼	Serco	152¾	+ 2⅜	...	6.2
57½	27½	Smiths News	48⅛	+ ⅜	...	4.6
3596	2452	**Smurfit Kappa**	2930	+ 61	...	13.3
64⅜	32½	Staffline Gp♦	35½	...	...	27.3
484½	317⅜	SThree	447½	+ 2	...	14.4
137½	95	Synectics♦	117½	...	...	...
34½	21⅝	Thruvision Group♦	24	...	...	-8.7
94½	39	Tribal♦	50	...	...	15.6
92½	49	Vianet♦	72½	...	...	...
980	660	Vp	686	+ 1	...	16.9
2⅞	1	Westminster♦	1⅜	...	...	-1.7

Real estate

High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Yld%	P/E
177⅞	95½	Shaftesbury Cap‡	119⅜	− 3½	...	35.1

Retailing

High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Yld%	P/E
95½	37⅜	AO World	61⅜	+ 2½	...	...
586	295½	**B&M European**	470	+ 5⅜	...	10.9
42⅝	20¼	Brown (N)♦	34	+ 1½	...	10.0
102⅛	40⅝	Card Factory	88¼	+ 1⅜	...	...
2122	1549	CVS Group♦	1881	+ 9	...	52.6
222½	104⅝	DFS Furn	133	...	...	7.0
1266	670½	Dunelm‡	1133	− 40	...	15.2
949½	600	**Frasers Group**	731	+ 17	...	32.4
2820	1673	Greggs	2600	+ 62	...	22.7
271¾	124⅝	Halfords	180½	− 1⅜	...	6.0
824½	480⅜	Howden Joinery	676¾	+ 17	...	12.7
941	647	Inchcape	857½	+ 17	...	28.9
4⅞	1⅝	IQ-AI	2¼	...	...	-8.1
186⅝	89⅛	**JD Sports**	166⅝	+ 4⅛	...	20.1
294½	203	**Kingfisher**	277	+ 3⅝	...	6.9
97½	61½	Lookers	82	− ⅝	...	5.2
166⅝	93⅝	Marks & Spencer	146½	+ 1⅜	...	...
12½	6	Mothercare♦	8⅛	...	...	-5.1
397½	75½	Naked Wines♦	90	− ⅞	...	...
7076	4383	**Next**	6752	+ 94	...	12.8
1244	393	**Ocado**	435½	+ 10⅞	...	...
28⅜	17¾	Pendragon	17⅛	+ ¼	...	5.3
396	257⅜	Pets at Home	353⅛	− 3⅜	...	14.4
258	72⅝	Saga	135½	− 1⅜	...	...
271⅛	169⅞	**Sainsbury's**	254⅛	+ 1⅜	...	21.3
1714	1132½	WH Smith	1476	+ 13½	...	...
30½	14⅞	Sosandar♦	22⅞	...	...	...
2¼	1⅜	Stanley Gbbns♦	1½	...	...	-1.6
...	...	Studio Retail#	115	− 2½	...	2.4
156	69½	Ted Baker	109⅞	...	...	...
286⅞	199⅞	**Tesco**	252	...	...	12.8
59½	38	Topps Tiles	47	+ ⅜	...	8.5

Technology

High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Yld%	P/E
108	62½	Access Intell♦	79½	...	...	...
143	28½	Aferian plc♦	28½	+ 2½	...	5.1
187	129	Alfa Financial	129	+ 3	...	20.1
22½	8¼	Allied Minds	13⅜	+ 3⅝	...	-1.2
430	290	Aptitude Software	370	...	...	41.5
265	126½	Bango♦	237½	+ 4	...	...
53⅞	21	BATM Adv Coms	23	+ ⅜	...	9.6
34	14	Berkeley Res	19	− ⅜	...	-8.1
21½	10¼	Blackbird♦	10½	...	...	...
1⅝	⅜	CloudCoCo Group♦	1¼	...	...	-2.9
2978	1810	Computacenter	2058	+ 26	...	12.7
96	65½	Concurrent Tech♦	74	− 1½	...	17.5
14½	6⅜	Corero♦	6⅞	...	...	...
2250	1340	Craneware♦	1340	− 50	...	61.1
3	1⅜	Crimson Tide♦	2½	...	...	17.3
24	11⅞	CyanConn Hldgs♦	18⅞	...	...	...
287½	221	D4t4 Solutions♦	225	...	...	26.6
⅛	...	DeepMatter Gp♦	...	...	...	-0.1
22½	13	Dillistone Group♦	18½	...	...	-5.3
1⅛	⅛	EQTEC♦	⅛	...	...	-3.3
1108	599	FDM Group	810	+ 4	...	28.1
16⅜	9	Filtronic♦	13	+ ¼	...	35.1
2450	1230	First Derivts♦	1740	+ 56	...	...
647	313⅝	GB Group♦	337⅛	+ 7	...	25.7
180½	136	GreshamTech	157½	...	...	...
143½	24½	Ilika♦	41	+ 1½	...	...
132½	77½	Ingenta♦	115½	+ 1	...	67.5
77	38	Intercede♦	62½	+ ½	...	21.5
200	112	Iomart♦	137	+ 5	...	15.0
59⅞	26½	IQE♦	26⅞	+ 1⅛	...	...
165	112½	K3 Business Tch♦	112½	− 5	...	-1.9
2048½	1091⅜	LG Electronics‡	1502⅝	+ 16½	...	4.0
¼	⅛	Location Sciences♦	⅛	...	...	-3.1
...	...	Micro Focus Intl	532	+ ½	...	-5.6
70½	45	MTI Wireless♦	52½	+ ½	...	17.4
55¾	17	Nanoco Gp	21⅜	+ ⅜	...	...
108½	52	Netcall♦	104	+ 4½	...	...
62½	41	Northamber♦	42	...	...	...
38½	10¼	Online Blockchain♦	19	+ ½	...	...
112⅝	76½	Oxford Metrics♦	102½	+ 2½	...	44.5
9	5⅛	Parity♦	5⅞	...	...	-8.3
41½	28½	Pennant Intl♦	37	...	...	...
630	390⅜	Playtech	543	+ 19	...	5.7
394⅜	294½	QinetiQ	328½	+ 1⅜	...	25.6
156⅞	20½	RM	66½	...	...	13.3
817½	595⅜	**Sage**	753¼	+ 10⅜	...	28.8
8⅛	5⅛	Seeing Machines♦	5⅞	...	...	...
139	78½	Shearwater Grp♦	90½	...	...	56.0
77½	31½	Smartspace S'ware♦	39	...	...	-4.0
1786	1084	Softcat	1098	+ 27	...	21.5
286½	168	Spirent Comms‡	168	− 9	...	15.6
54	24⅜	SRT Marine♦	37½	+ 1	...	...
721½	442½	Tele. Ericsson	442¼	+ ¼	...	8.0
90	70	Touchstar♦	82½	+ 2½	...	...
1055	860	Tracsis♦	885	− 10	...	...
20½	12⅛	Trakm8♦	14	− ½	...	...
145	81	Triad Grp	132½	...	...	14.5
1380	222½	Wandisco♦#	1310	− 38	...	...
925	440	Water Intel♦	440	− 10	...	24.2
273	144½	Xaar	170½	+ ½	...	...
10	¼	Yourgene♦	¼	...	...	-0.2
205	101	Zoo Digital♦	205	+ 12½	...	...

Telecoms

High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Yld%	P/E
196	100	AdEPT Technology♦‡	196	...	...	...
170⅞	107⅛	**Airtel Africa**	110	+ 1⅜	...	9.8
196½	112	**BT Group**	146⅝	+ 3¼	...	14.2
100¼	53⅛	Currys plc	64⅞	− 6⅝	...	3.0
1514	1012	Gamma Comms♦	1152	− 6	...	20.8
144¼	100⅛	Helios Towers	107¾	+ 3⅛	...	-9.7
3009	1103½	Just Eat T'away	1612¾	+ 46⅝	...	-3.4
⅞	...	Mobile Streams♦	⅛	...	...	-1.7
2¼	⅝	Mobile Tornado♦	2	...	...	...
2500	1430	Telecom Plus	1918	+ 30	...	49.1
132⅛	83⅛	**Vodafone**	92⅝	− 1¼	...	...

Transport

High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Yld%	P/E
340	226	Braemar Ship	296	+ 3½	...	9.8
591¾	285	EasyJet	487¼	+ 17	...	-3.0
11½	4½	Esken Limited	4⅞	...	...	-0.2
139½	93½	FirstGroup	103	− 1	...	24.5
407	251	Fisher (James)	322½	− 3	...	-5.8
173½	93⅛	**International Airlines**	136½	+ 2⅞	...	-3.0
371⅝	183⅛	IDS	225⅛	+ 3½	...	2.5
439¼	280¾	Irish Cont Uts	414	+ 10	...	...
1381½	667⅞	Jet2♦	1277	+ 3½	...	-6.8
272½	120¼	Natl Express	120¼	− 8	...	-7.1
1050	820	Ocean Wilson	910	− 10	...	4.6
106¼	104	Stagecoach	104⅞	...	...	14.7
24	19½	Sutton Harbour♦	22	...	...	...
424	198⅝	Wincanton	198⅜	− 7¼	...	5.3
3256	1357½	Wizz Air	2700	+ 49	...	-6.1

Utilities

High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Yld%	P/E
105⅛	67⅛	**Centrica**	103⅜	+ ¾	...	10.4
258	186½	ContourGlobal	251	+ ½	...	28.3
831½	473⅞	Drax Group	614½	− 7	...	45.5
617½	484	Jersey Electricity‡	495	...	...	9.3
1245½	958⅜	**National Grid**	1058	+ 9½	...	24.6
9⅛	5⅜	OPG Power♦	9⅞	...	...	6.1
1113	755	Pennon‡	877½	+ 4½	...	63.5
⅝	⅛	Rurelec♦	¼	...	...	-0.2
3211	2213	**Severn Trent**	2850	+ 40	...	...
1920	1428	**SSE**	1735	+ 15½	...	6.7
1176½	828⅛	**United Utilities**	1065	+ 11½	...	97.7

♦AIM company; # Price at suspension; † Ex dividend; ‡ Ex scrip; ▲ Ex rights issue; ▼ Ex all; § Ex capital distribution; ☆ figures or report awaited; . . . No significant data. Companies in bold are constituents of the FTSE 100 Index. Investment Cos sector Nav Dis or Prm supplied by Morningstar.

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Drummer for Eric Clapton who co-wrote Layla
Jim Gordon
Page 50

Register

Obituaries

Major General Sir Sebastian Roberts

Quintessential Irish Guards officer known for writing the army's moral doctrine manual and his deft way of handling the press

Imposingly tall, with Byronic looks, a donnish manner and an elegant, sometimes enigmatic turn of phrase, Sebastian Roberts was known throughout the army, if not at first always quite understood; and he could enjoy the bewilderment.

He was not only the colonel of "the Micks", as the Irish Guards are affectionately known — a role now performed by the Princess of Wales — he was also their quintessential officer: warm, cheery and unfailingly courteous to all ranks. For its coverage of Queen Elizabeth's funeral last autumn, the BBC regarded Roberts as their go-to expert on matters of military pomp and circumstance.

Yet his lasting legacy is the army's moral doctrine manual, *Soldiering: The Military Covenant* (1998), which he wrote at the behest of the Army Board to encapsulate for both soldiers and government what it was that gave the army its unique ethos. It was a timely reminder that the "covenant" works both ways. We ask soldiers to risk their lives in our defence and we, as a nation, have a moral obligation to members of the armed forces and their families in return.

JOHNNY GREEN/PA





Roberts presenting medals to members of D Squadron, the Household Cavalry Regiment, at Combermere Barracks in 2004; left, with Queen Elizabeth II and the Duke of Edinburgh in 2006

Sebastian John Lechmere Roberts was born in Aldershot in 1954, the eldest of seven sons, five of whose names ended in "ian", and three daughters of Brigadier John Roberts, Welsh Guards, and his wife Nicola (née Macaskie). His father captained the army rugby team and later commanded 2nd Battalion, the Parachute Regiment. His mother and her twin, Claudia, were protégées of the theologian Monsignor Ronald Knox, chaplain at their convent school.

Unsurprisingly, therefore, Roberts was educated at Ampleforth, when Basil (later Cardinal) Hume was abbot. Contemporaries remember him as "a theatrical figure, highly articulate and entertaining."

He went up to Balliol College, Oxford, to read modern history, and was a member of the boisterous and bibulous Bullingdon Club there. On graduating in 1976 he applied to join the army, but his chances of being accepted at first looked uncertain on health grounds.

"When I was about nine years old," he recalled, "my parents became concerned about my 'bumpy' chest. Our family doctor referred me to Great Ormond Street, so a few weeks later I found myself standing in my baggy underpants in front of a full lecture theatre of young doctors, still bemused at having been ushered behind a curtain and told by a nurse to 'make water' into a paper cup. Never having heard the term before, I peed and then spat in it for good measure."

He was diagnosed with Marfan syndrome, an inherited disorder affecting the fibres that support the organs and other structures in the body. "For the next few years … I had weekly [physiotherapy] sessions with Miss Davis, a tiny ball of energy and strength who had studied yoga in northern India decades before it was made fashionable by rock stars. She taught me to breathe, to walk, to relax: a wonderful preparation for the rest of my life." The retired major-general at the medical board was intrigued by Roberts's height, high palate, long fingers and still bumpy, though stronger, chest, but when asked if Marfan presented any problem, replied "only for your tailor, my boy". A year later Roberts was commissioned into the Irish Guards via the short university course at Sandhurst.

As an older subaltern, promotion came quickly. In 1979 and now an acting captain he took part in Operation Agila in Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) to bring an end to the fighting that had followed the prime minister Ian Smith's 1965 unilateral declaration of independence. Detachments of a dozen or so men were deployed along the forest edges to induce guerrillas of the two rebel factions to surrender their arms and join the political process. It was a perilous business, as any of the rendezvous points could have been overwhelmed. None were, due in large measure to the proverbial good humour of the British soldier, and in Roberts's case theatrical panache. He carried no personal weapon, just an Irish blackthorn stick, and wore casual uniform, seemingly modelling his carefree air on "Joe" Vandeleur, commanding officer of the Irish Guards during Operation Market Garden, and played by Michael Caine in the film *A Bridge Too Far*.

At the Staff College in 1986 he came top of the course and was graded "A", a rare rating. From there he went to be chief of staff of 4th Armoured Brigade in the British Army of the Rhine. A spell

His casual air resembled Michael Caine's character in A Bridge Too Far

as a company commander with 1st Irish Guards followed in Belize and then Berlin.

Promotion to lieutenant colonel came at 37, the lowest age permitted, as MA to the CGS: first, General (later Field Marshal) Sir John Chapple (obituary March 26, 2022), but for the most part, General Sir Peter (later Field Marshal Lord) Inge (obituary July 20, 2022), one of the hardest taskmasters in uniform. Roberts provided the necessary balm for Inge's formidable style, and encouraged a more "human" face. Inge knew he had to get out and about, but didn't enjoy public speaking, insisting on speaking notes for each visit. One day Roberts substituted blank pages, a perilous gambit, but Inge rarely used notes again.

Roberts then took command of 1st Irish Guards, including an emergency tour in East Tyrone, only the second time that "the Micks" had served in Northern Ireland. For many years the two Irish cavalry regiments and three infantry battalions had not been used on Operation Banner, lest family or local pressure was applied to individual soldiers. The Irish Guards were at something of a disadvantage, therefore, not having built up the operational experience that others had, particularly at junior level.

The tour was not the success it might have been, and Roberts undoubtedly paid the price. Having been on the trajectory for brigade command, he now found for the first time a check in his impressive rise. He still had his supporters, however, and in 1996 was promoted to full colonel in the army's doctrine branch, where he put his lively mind and elegant pen to good use in writing *The Military Covenant*.

Three years later he was back on track with promotion to brigadier and an appointment as director of public relations (army), a prestigious job previously reserved for post-brigade command. "The job was made easy by the fact that we were front-page news every day, with deployments to Kosovo, Sierra Leone, East Timor, Macedonia, Iraq and Afghanistan … easy and very busy," he said.

He relished the challenge from which many another would have recoiled even when, as was the case with Afghanistan, the London press cohort was demanding information hour by hour.

In early 2002 he was selected to command the UN force about to go to Sierra Leone, an appointment that would have suited his flair for getting people to co-operate. The post required a rigorous UN medical examination, however, which revealed a hitherto unsuspected fault with an aortic valve. An emergency operation was successful but Roberts needed several months' convalescence, and the job went to someone else. Instead he attended a year's course at the Royal College of Defence Studies (RCDS) designed to develop strategic thinking.

At the end of 2003 he regained "line speed" on appointment as general officer commanding London District and major general of the Household Division. Along with wearing a cocked hat and sitting at the desk once used by the Duke of Wellington, the job has many delights but is no sinecure. Daily ceremonials in the public gaze together

Hostesses received amusing cartoons rather than thank-you letters

with the great state occasions and the visits of foreign dignitaries tested his nerve, especially after a further session of heart surgery. On relinquishing the command in 2007 he received the "customary K" and returned to the RCDS as chief of staff.

On St Patrick's Day 2008 he was elevated to the colonelcy of the Irish Guards, an honorary position responsible for safeguarding the regiment's interests, which he retained until 2011 when he handed over to the Duke of Cambridge, having left regular service the previous year.

Roberts subsequently held several other honorary positions, was Her Majesty's and then His Majesty's representative on the governing body of the Royal Armouries, and set up The Military Mutual, an insurance mutual for serving and retired members of the armed forces and their families.

He was a talented and amusing cartoonist. Hostesses received cartoons rather than thank-you letters. Besides family and the Girdlers' Company, however, military history and the Irish Guards remained his abiding interest.

In 1979 he married Elizabeth Muir, daughter of a former commanding officer of the Queen's Dragoon Guards. Lady Roberts survives him, along with their two sons, Julian and Orlando, who both followed their father (and two uncles) into the regiment, and their two daughters: Cosima, a tutor, and Flavia, who works for a travel company.

Roberts was a man of great charm and deep faith. Field Marshal Lord Guthrie, formerly of the Welsh Guards and SAS, said of him: "He was in his time the army's finest ambassador."

Major General Sir Sebastian Roberts KCVO, OBE, was born on January 7, 1954. He died of undisclosed causes on March 9, 2023, aged 69

Register

Jim Gordon

Troubled drummer who went from the high of co-writing Layla with Eric Clapton to the low of being imprisoned for murder

One night in September 1970, Eric Clapton wandered into the recording studio and found his drummer Jim Gordon playing the piano alone.

They had recently finished recording the Derek and the Dominos album *Layla and Other Assorted Love Songs*, with its heartfelt title song about Clapton's love for Pattie Boyd, who was then married to George Harrison.

As Clapton later told Guitar Player magazine, he discovered that Gordon "had been secretly going back into the studio and recording his own album without any of us knowing it". Struck by the haunting tune Gordon was playing, he hit upon the idea of stitching it together with the title song he had already written and recorded. "Come on, man. Can we have that?" he asked.

As Gordon had been recording clandestinely during Clapton's studio time, he was in no position to refuse and they agreed to join the two pieces of music into one song, Gordon's half constituting *Layla*'s long instrumental coda.

Tom Dowd, who had produced *Layla and Other Assorted Love Songs* and thought that the record had been finished three weeks earlier, was horrified when Clapton called him and said he wanted to re-record the song with an added piano part.

"I thought, 'Oh my God, where does it go?' " Dowd recalled and told Clapton he was "absolutely stark raving mad".

Clapton was insistent and the coda was added with Gordon playing the piano part in a single take and the melody echoed an octave higher on slide guitar. When they had finished, one of the most memorable songs in the canon of classic rock songs was ready to fly. "I was absolutely wrong about not being able to make the new part fit," Dowd admitted. "We spliced it in and I knew immediately that we had something really, really special."

When the album was released, the track was credited to Clapton-Gordon, although the origins of the plaintive piano melody are disputed. The singer Rita Coolidge, a former girlfriend of Gordon, claimed that she had co-written it with him under the title *Time*, and her composition with that name and a very similar tune was subsequently recorded by her sister Priscilla.

When she first heard *Layla* on the radio, she called Robert Stigwood, Clapton's manager, and asked for her name to be added to the writing credit.

He refused and the songwriting royalties remained with Gordon. However, he had little time to enjoy the proceeds for by 1983 he was behind bars for murdering his 72-year-old mother. With a history of mental illness, he claimed that he had heard voices in his head telling him to kill her and that he had been "guided by a zombie".

Coolidge subsequently revealed that he had assaulted her in 1970 when they were on tour with Joe Cocker's band. "He hit me so hard that I was lifted off the floor and slammed against the wall on the other side of the hallway," she said. "He was an amazing guy, really so charismatic. But I started to recognise that look in his eye and knew that he was not playing with a full deck."

There were other instances of assault and Gordon checked himself into hospital several times. Yet for a long while his fellow musicians were seemingly unaware of his condition.

Over the next few years he recorded with Steely Dan, Alice Cooper, Frank Zappa, Tom Waits, Joan Baez and Tom Petty among others. "He was gentle, sincere, considerate, brutally handsome, charming as a snake, and could he play," the singer Bonnie Bramlett recalled.

As his behaviour became increasingly erratic — exacerbated by drink and drugs — by 1980 the work had dried up. Dismissed as just another drug-crazed rock star it was only after he had attacked his mother with a hammer and stabbed her with a butcher's knife that he was diagnosed with acute schizophrenia.

ESTATE OF KEITH MORRIS/GETTY IMAGES



Gordon recording in 1971, 12 years before he attacked and killed his mother

He spent the rest of his life in a psychiatric prison and was repeatedly denied parole, although when Rolling Stone interviewed him he insisted, "I really don't feel that crazy. I get along with people. I think I'm pretty normal."

It was a tragic end to what should have been a brilliant career. "When people say that Jimmy Gordon is the greatest rock'n'roll drummer that ever lived, I think it's true, beyond anybody," Clapton wrote in his 2007 autobiography.

His two marriages, to Jill Gordon, a dancer, and Reneé Armand, a singer, ended in divorce. He is survived by his daughter, Amy, from his first marriage.

James Beck Gordon was born in 1945 in Los Angeles, the second son of a maternity nurse and an alcoholic father who worked as an accountant. Tall and strongly built with curly blond hair, he grew up as a polite and respectful boy who "mowed the lawn, shined his father's shoes and minded his manners".

At eight he built a drum kit out of tin cans. His parents sent him to music lessons and when he was 12 bought him his first full drum kit. While still at school he played with the Burbank Symphony Orchestra and, with a fake ID because he was under age, was soon playing in the Hollywood clubs.

Turning down a music scholarship to UCLA, by 17 he was playing for the Everly Brothers and swiftly became an A-list studio drummer, playing three or four sessions a day for artists ranging from Judy Collins to the Beach Boys. At one time he was flying between Los Angeles and Las Vegas on a daily basis, combining studio sessions with evening shows at Caesars Palace.

By the late 1960s he was playing with Delaney & Bonnie alongside Harrison, who asked him to play on his *All Things Must Pass* album. Then came the call from Clapton who flew Gordon, keyboardist Bobby Whitlock and bassist Carl Radle to Britain and invited them to live with him at Hurtwood Edge, his mansion in Surrey. Together with Duane Allman they became Derek and the Dominos.

Later Gordon settled in Chelsea, bought a Ferrari and began working with Clapton on a second Dominos album. "But it just fell to pieces," Clapton recalled. "The final straw came when Jim Gordon and I had a huge row and I stormed out of the studio. The band never played together again."

There were plenty of others queueing up for Gordon's services, including John Lennon who asked him to play on *Imagine* and Steve Winwood, who recruited him to join Traffic.

He returned to California in 1973 and continued working as the most in-demand drummer in LA. Yet the signs were there that his illness was winning. During session breaks, he would stand alone in the corner mumbling to himself, listening to his voices.

Jim Gordon, drummer, was born on July 14, 1945. He died of undisclosed causes on March 13, 2023, aged 77

Edwin Dawes

Magician whose greatest trick was to combine showbusiness with his day job as an eminent biochemistry professor

Eddie Dawes was one of the world's leading chroniclers of the esoteric world of magic, writing numerous books on the subject as well as a remarkable 500 columns over 48 years for the Magic Circle's monthly magazine, The Magic Circular.

He staged his own magic shows, lectured on the history of magic, amassed a vast collection of conjuring paraphernalia and filled his home with more than 7,000 books on "the magic arts" and their development over the centuries.

Yet his greatest trick was to combine all that with his demanding day job as an eminent biochemist at Hull University; he wrote extensively on that subject too, and led the development of one of the first biodegradable plastics.

Compartmentalisation was the key to his success. Except at lunchtimes, when Dawes would scour catalogues for books on magic in the university library run by his friend Philip Larkin, he would spend all day doing his academic work. Not until 10.15pm would he turn from microbes to magic, often staying up until 2am as he became, over the decades, a man who David Copperfield, the celebrated American illusionist, called "one of the great, if not the greatest, magic historians of my lifetime".

Edwin Alfred Dawes was born in Goole, Yorkshire, in 1925. His father was a railway clerk who died of tuberculosis when Dawes was 14. Thereafter his mother went to work in the local food office. His introduction to magic came when he was five and recuperating from pneumonia. To entertain him, his father and grandfather taught him a few elementary magic tricks. Soon he was collecting vouchers from the front of porridge boxes to acquire *The Quaker Oats Master Book of Magic*. He started performing tricks at friends' birthday parties and gave his first public magic show at the age of nine, but developed a new interest when he began attending Goole grammar school: chemistry. In a homemade laboratory in the garden shed, he "liberated" some chlorine gas to test his gas mask at the start of the Second World War. Happily, it worked.

In 1943 Dawes went to Leeds University where he secured a degree and a PhD in chemistry, and met his future wife, Amy, a domestic science student at the Yorkshire Training College of Housecraft. They married in 1950 and had two sons: Michael, who became a food industry executive, and Adrian, who became an investment manager and, for a while, a magician himself. Amy died in 2014.



Dawes performing with his wife, Amy

In the same year that he married, Dawes moved to Glasgow University as a senior lecturer. While attending a conference in Edinburgh in 1951 he discovered a shop called the Scottish Magic Studio, whose owner introduced him to Abracadabra magazine and sold him a pile of back copies. "I bore them away to a seat in Princes Street Gardens, opened up their pages and simultaneously the gateway to an entirely new world," he recalled. "The discovery there were others out there, of advertisements for dealers, descriptions of tricks, and news of the doings of other aficionados, was a revelation."

He joined the Scottish Conjurors' Association, then the International Brotherhood of Magicians, and later the elite Magic Circle, becoming its official historian and one of only ten members to be awarded its Gold Medal. His wife banned him from reading about biochemistry in bed, but she looked over his shoulder as he read magic books and became interested herself. They started performing their own stage show entitled *Only Make-Believe*. They subsequently developed a show called *A Plethora of Prestidigitation* using Victorian costumes and equipment for which they adopted the aliases Professor Bluffman and Madame Patrice.

In 1963 Dawes became the founding professor of the biochemistry department at Hull University, running it until 1986. There he led the development of the biodegradable plastic Biopol. ICI, then Britain's largest chemical company, used it to make disposable carrier bags in the early 1970s until it reached the unfortunate conclusion that they would never catch on.

At various times Dawes served as Hull's dean of science and pro-vice-chancellor. He wrote biochemistry textbooks and edited European scientific journals. But he continued, with his wife acting as typist and researcher, to write more than 20 books about magic and magicians, and to produce "A Rich Cabinet of Magical Curiosities", his monthly column for The Magic Circular which ran from 1972 to 2020.

He also continued to collect magic books and paraphernalia until he had filled Dane Hill, his large home on Hull's western fringe where he and his wife entertained fellow scientists and magicians. Another regular guest was Larkin, whom Dawes had got to know through his involvement with the university library. He took the poet to annual dinners of the Hull Magicians' Circle, of which he was president for 57 years, and once persuaded Dale Salwak, the illustrious Californian magician, to stage a private show for Larkin at Dane Hill. Afterwards Larkin told Dawes that it was one of the most remarkable evenings of his life.

A decade after Larkin's death Dawes helped to set up the Philip Larkin Society, which he chaired from 1995 until 2020. In that capacity he led an ultimately successful campaign to have Larkin commemorated in Poets' Corner in Westminster Abbey.

In 2018 Dawes appeared on a BBC Radio 4 programme entitled *I Was Philip Larkin's Magician*. "There's a relationship between chemistry and magic," he contended. "From the earliest times scientific principles were being used in order to create magical effects. The priests of the ancient temples, the Greeks and Egyptians, used their superior knowledge of science to create effects such as the mysterious opening of temple doors in response to lighting fires on altars." Like those ancient priests, Dawes never revealed the secrets of his tricks, or those of his fellow magicians, honouring the solemn vow taken by all members of The Magic Circle.

Edwin Dawes, biochemistry professor and magic historian, was born on July 6, 1925. He died on March 3, 2023, aged 97

Carlos Saura

Influential Spanish film-maker whose works critiqued Franco's repressive regime

ALAMY





Saura in 1966. His tragi-comedy ¡Ay Carmela! (1990), above, was his most successful film

In the 1966 psychological thriller *La Caza* (The Hunt), three middle-aged veterans of the Spanish Civil War reunite to shoot frightened rabbits that dart across a desolate valley. As the day unfolds they begin to reminisce about the war, eventually turning their guns on each other.

When it was first released, *La Caza* caused a stir in a country still haunted by the war, and still ruled by the same dictator, General Francisco Franco, who had risen to power during the conflict 30 years before. Spain's most prominent film directors of the time — Juan Antonio Bardem, Luis García Berlana and Luis Buñuel — had only indirectly referenced the fascist regime through gallows humour or surrealist imagery, but *La Caza*'s 34-year-old writer and director Carlos Saura took direct aim. The film, a thinly veiled political parable that addressed tensions still simmering beneath the surface of Franco's Spain, fell under the knife of the authorities, who cut references to the civil war.

Saura had only a handful of documentaries and feature films to his name and *La Caza*, which won the Silver Bear for best director at the Berlin International Film Festival, brought him international fame. It reawakened Spanish cinema after decades of dormancy and its politically expedient language of allegory would shape Spanish film for decades to come. "I wonder whether with this continued containment, we are perhaps inventing a new language — of silences, symbols," mused Saura in 1971. "It is the way I go now. I go in circles."

A year later he won the Silver Bear for a second time with *Peppermint Frappé*, in which a middle-aged doctor becomes sexually obsessed with a woman he believes he once met in youth — a comment on the sterility of life under Franco.

Saura became an emblem of cultural dissidence within Franco's Spain. Right-wing groups lobbed stink bombs at the theatre where *La prima Angélica* (Cousin Angelica, 1973), a film about a man's memories of the civil war, received its premiere in Madrid. They were particularly enraged with a scene in which a character's broken arm is plaster-casted into a permanent fascist salute.

In 1971 his initial script for *Anna and the Wolves*, in which a young governess is seduced and killed by three brothers in the run-down mansion in which she works, was blocked by the Information Ministry. "They [the brothers] represent for me the three monsters of Spain," explained Saura. "Perversions of religiosity, repressed sexuality and the authoritarian spirit." The film was first shown at the Cannes Film Festival in 1973, starring Geraldine Chaplin (daughter of Charlie Chaplin), Saura's star actress and a romantic partner.

In the gentler atmosphere of democracy after Franco died in 1975, Saura's films became less politically angled. That same year he released his masterpiece *Cría Cuervos* (Raise Ravens), a psychological thriller featuring Ana Torrent. The title derived from a Spanish proverb, "Raise crows, and they'll pluck out your eyes", evoking the complexity and sometimes cruelty of parent-child relations through the story of an eight-year-old girl who convinces herself that she has poisoned her father.

"Franco took so long to die that we all had time to buy champagne and store it in the fridge," said Saura, a garrulous man with scraggly hair. "When he finally died you could hear the corks popping. But *Cría Cuervos* wasn't a conscious attack on Francoism. Things were changing."

Carlos Saura Atarés was born in 1932 in Huesca, northeastern Spain, the second of four children to Antonio Saura and Fermina Atarés, a pianist.

His elder brother, Antonio, became a noted abstract impressionist painter. His father was a senior tax official for the Ministry of Finance and the family lived in Madrid at the outbreak of the civil war, enduring bombing before relocating with the Republican government to Valencia and then Barcelona. Memories of this traumatic period were to shape Saura's films. *La prima Angélica* immortalised the memory of Saura's classmate being struck by flying glass during a bombing, and *La Caza* referenced the corpses that were stored in a basement room of his high school.

When the war ended a young Saura was sent back to Huesca to live with his grandmother before rejoining his family in 1941 in Madrid, where he became a passionate cinephile. He initially studied engineering at the University of Madrid, but became interested in photography, particularly of ballet and flamenco dancers. In 1951 his work was exhibited at the Royal Photographic Society of Madrid, and in city halls in Madrid and Cuenca.

Encouraged by his brother, he dropped out of university and joined the Instituto de Investigaciones y Experiencias Cinematográficas (IIEC). He developed an interest in the Italian neo-realist films of Antonioni, Visconti and Fellini — particularly their focus on memory, fantasy and dreams — and made short films. After graduating he taught at the school until 1964, when he was fired for his left-wing views.

One film referenced the corpses stored in a basement room of his high school

In 1960 Saura directed his first feature *Los Golfos* (The Delinquents), a trenchant account of boys in Madrid seeking an escape from their dead-end lives in the bullring. The film was delayed by censors, who axed sentences such as "it is difficult here to be someone", but it marked the start of the Spanish New Wave, which rebelled against patriotic historical narratives of the 1950s. Saura later dissociated himself from the movement. "I don't believe in schools as such in cinema," he said. "My aim was to reflect life as it was, Spanish reality as it was and to express the reality of Spanish society."

When *Los Golfos* had its premiere at Cannes, two years before it was allowed to be shown in Spain, Saura befriended Buñuel; decades later, he made the older director the protagonist of *Bunuel and King Solomon's Table* (2001), a fictionalised account of Buñuel's youth. Saura was reportedly instrumental in persuading him to return from exile in Mexico to Spain to make *Viridiana* (1961), which horrified Franco's regime with its anticlericalism and temporarily halted Saura's own directorial career.

After Franco's death Saura's social commentary became not only less urgent — "after the demise of Franco I felt liberated from the duty to make political cinema" — but also less critically acclaimed. For the first time he went abroad to work, shooting *Antonieta* (1982), about a psychologist who researches suicidal women.

He revealed a new interest in films about music, dance and folklore, making a colourful Flamenco Trilogy consisting of *Blood Wedding* (1981), *Carmen* (1983) and *El Amor Brujo* (1986). Still, his films continued to register the civil war. "Song was in the air, particularly flamenco song," he said. "Soldiers and workers everywhere sang it in the street." His most successful film, *¡Ay Carmela!* (1990), turned the war into a tragi-comedy in which three Republican travelling players accidentally stray into rebel territory.

He was married three times; to Adele Medrano in 1957; in 1982 to Mercedes Pérez; and finally in 2006 to the actress Eulàlia Ramon. She survives him with his seven children: two sons from his first marriage, Antonio and Carlos; three from his second, Manuel, Adrián and Diego; a son Shane by Geraldine Chaplin; and a daughter, Anna, from his final marriage.

The film-maker, who had some 50 titles to his name, declared that he would rather die than stop working. In the event he worked up until his death, in his final week releasing *Las Paredes Hablan* (Walls Can Talk), a documentary about the origins of art. He died just a day before receiving the prestigious Goya de Honor in recognition of his "having shaped the history of modern Spanish cinema".

Carlos Saura, Spanish film-maker, was born on January 4, 1932. He died of respiratory problems on February 10, 2023, aged 91

Court Circular

St James's Palace
16th March, 2023
The Duke of Edinburgh, Patron, The Duke of Edinburgh's International Award Foundation, this morning held a Nigerian National Award Operators Board Meeting with Board Members in Nigeria via video link.

Kensington Palace
16th March, 2023
The Duke of Gloucester, Patron, Cathedrals in Pilgrimage, and The Duchess of Gloucester, Royal Patron, Cathedral Music Trust, today visited Lichfield Cathedral and were received by His Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant of Staffordshire (Mr Ian Dudson).

Their Royal Highnesses this afternoon presented The Queen's Award for Enterprise: Sustainable Development to Cosy Direct, Fauld Industrial Estate, Fauld Lane, Fauld, Staffordshire.

The Duke of Gloucester, Patron, Cathedrals in Pilgrimage, and The Duchess of Gloucester, Royal Patron, Cathedral Music Trust, later visited Derby Cathedral and were received by His Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant of Derbyshire (Mrs Elizabeth Fothergill).

St James's Palace
16th March, 2023
The Duke of Kent, President, Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies, this evening held a Dinner at Buckingham Palace.

Births, Marriages and Deaths

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'RESPECT your father and your mother, so that you may live a long time in the land that I am giving you'. Exodus 20.12 (GNB)

Births

ELLETSON on 28th February 2023 to Edwina (née Elkington) and Edward, a son, Bertie Philip Robert Chandos.

Forthcoming Marriages

**MR J. G. LEDGER
AND MISS L. A. K. INGHAM**
The engagement is announced between Jack, eldest son of Mr and Mrs David Ledger of Cheam, Surrey, and Louisa, daughter of Mr and Mrs Michael Ingham of Wimbledon, London.

Deaths

BARKER Patricia Ann (née James) passed away peacefully on 24th February 2023, aged 92, at the Red House, Yelverton, Devon. Former head of English at Heathfield School, Pinner. Widow of Dr Derek Charles Barker and a dear sister, aunt, stepmother, grandmother and great-grandmother. Funeral Wednesday, March 22nd, 3.30pm, at Western Mill Crematorium, Plymouth. Donations to League of Friends Derriford Hospital, Plymouth.



BEAGLEY

Heather Blanche (née Osmond) of Richmond, London, passed away peacefully in her sleep on 28th February 2023, aged 101, at Margaret House Care Home (Ware).

Heather, born in 1922, grew up in Bristol, was the first woman in her family to go to university and became head of English at Hove Grammar School. She continued voluntary teaching until retirement except on Mondays when she liked to play golf! At the age of 20 she married Thomas Lorne Beagley and they lived very happily together in Barnes and East Sheen for 58 years. They were posted to Paris and then Singapore for several years and travelled very widely. Heather led a very long and active life. She worked as a volunteer for Oxfam for 20 years and was interested in the arts, playing bridge and going on innumerable holidays! She felt very fortunate to have had so many good friends. She is survived by her three children, four grandchildren and six great-grandchildren.

A memorial celebration will be held at 2pm Tuesday 18th April at Christ Church East Sheen. Heather requested no flowers but please make charitable donations to the Macmillan Trust or Cancer Research.

GOLDSTEIN Anne Milford (née Tweedy) died peacefully on 10th March 2023, aged 86, at home amid family. Beloved wife of Alfred for 63 years, mother of twins Simon and Paul, sister to Jane, grandmother of Joshua and Lucas, a fine lady who will be sorely missed. Funeral for family only, memorial service in summer. No flowers, donations to Hospice in the Weald at Pembury (01892 820533).

HARRISON Vivienne (née Rogers) died peacefully on 24th February 2023, aged 100. Beloved wife of the late Ronald Harrison and mother of Bryony, Cherryll and Anthony, Granny to five grandchildren and five great-grandchildren. A service of thanksgiving will be held at Tunbridge Wells Crematorium at 2.30pm on Monday 3rd April. Donations may be sent in lieu of flowers to British Heart Foundation or Alzheimer's Society via Vivienne's Tribute site: vivienneharrison.muchloved.com

HOPWOOD Margaret Angela died on 5th March 2023, aged 86. Loving mother of Sarah, Tessa, Fran and Lucy and cherished grandmother to ten grandchildren of who she was so proud. She was a courageous, talented, ambitious and kind lady and will be sadly missed. Her funeral will be held at the Parish Church of St Mary the Virgin, Church Street, Petworth GU28 0AE at 2pm on Tuesday 21st March. Donations to Dementia UK via wbryderandsons.co.uk/donations-and-tributes

MCCALL Henrietta Francesca, very suddenly on 5th March 2023, aged 74. Loving and beloved wife of Christopher, adored and devoted sister and aunt. A service of thanksgiving will be held in due course. Donations if desired to the Friends of Ewelme Church c/o Howard Chadwick, Funeral Directors, Crowmarsh Gifford (tel 01491 825222).

MOORE-SEARSON Patricia Anne on 27th February 2023, beloved wife of the late Lt Cdr Don Moore-Searson and much-loved mother of Elise and Nicholas. Funeral at Holy Trinity Sloane Square on Monday 27th March at 11am. Family flowers only.

PEART David Hunter on 8th March 2023, aged 79, died at home after a long illness. Beloved husband of Margaret, devoted father to Kirstin and Roger, and a loving grandfather to James, Molly, Beatrice, Grace and Wilfred. Funeral to be held at All Saints' Church, Hurworth-on-Tees, on Monday 27th March at 1pm. Family flowers only please.

POWELL

Avril Hayman (née Johnson) died peacefully on 2nd March 2023, aged 101. Sometime scholar of St Hugh's College, Oxford. Beloved wife of the late Ray Powell, much-loved mother, grandmother and great-grandmother. Family flowers only. Donations if wished to St Hugh's College, Oxford.

PRIOR Douglas Christopher died quietly on Friday 3rd March 2023, aged 93. Husband of the late Fenella, much-loved father to Lucinda and James and grandfather to Hector, Rory, Archie, Fergus, Max and Henry. Family funeral, no flowers please but donations if wished to the Atlantic Salmon Trust.

WALKER Geof, teacher at Brampton Junior School of more than 30 years, died peacefully at home in Brampton, Cumbria, on 10th March 2023, aged 67. Husband of Margaret, Dad to Hannah and Simon, and Pop to Harry, George and Matilda. At his request there will be no funeral service. Any donations in his memory please consider Maggie's so they can continue to provide the care and compassion they showed our family.

WARR

Geoffrey, aged 89. Passed away on 8th March 2023. Beloved husband of Sheena. Much-loved father of Jane and Richard (deceased). Brother of Margaret. Grandfather of Marina and George. Former employee of BP and the CBI and graduate of Magdalen College, Oxford.

In Memoriam - Private

ATKINSON, ARNOLD Remembered with love on St Patrick's Day, and every day.

Legal Notices

**CHILTERN BYRNE LIMITED
Company No: 09050101
(In Members' Voluntary Liquidation)
Trading Address: c/o The Old Chapel, Union Way, Witney, Oxfordshire, OX28 6HD**

Notice is hereby given that creditors of the Company are required, on or before 14 April 2023, to prove their debts by delivering their proofs (in the format specified in Rule 14.4 of the Insolvency (England and Wales) Rules 2016) to Rob Keyes and Paul Ellison, the Joint Liquidators (appointed 13 March 2023), at KRE Corporate Recovery Limited, Unit 8 The Aquarium, 1-7 King Street, Reading, Berks RG1 2AN or info@krecr.co.uk. If so required by notice from the Joint Liquidators, creditors must produce any document or other evidence which the Joint Liquidators consider is necessary to substantiate the whole or any part of a claim. Note: The Directors of the Company have made a declaration of solvency and it is expected that all creditors will be paid in full. For further details contact Lee Lloyd, Email: info@krecr.co.uk or telephone 01189 479090.

Rob Keyes, Joint Liquidator

**CR-2023-000121
IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUSTICE
BUSINESS AND PROPERTY
COURTS OF ENGLAND AND WALES
COMPANIES COURT (CR)
IN THE MATTER OF PARAGON
BANKING GROUP PLC
- and -
IN THE MATTER OF THE
COMPANIES ACT 2006**

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that a Part 8 Claim Form was issued on 8 March 2023 at the High Court of Justice (Business and Property Courts of England and Wales, Companies Court (CR)) for the confirmation of the cancellation of the capital redemption reserve of Paragon Banking Group plc (the "Company") (the "Capital Reduction").

AND NOTICE IS FURTHER GIVEN that the Part 8 Claim Form is directed to be heard before the Insolvency and Companies Court Judge at the Rolls Building, 7 Rolls Buildings, Fetter Lane, London EC4A 1NL on 28 March 2023.

AND any creditor or shareholder of the Company who wishes to oppose the making of an order for the confirmation of the Capital Reduction should appear at the time of the hearing in person or by Counsel for such purpose. When contacting the Company's solicitors, reference should be made to the "Paragon Banking Group plc Capital Reduction".

A copy of the said Part 8 Claim Form will be provided to any person requiring the same by the under-mentioned solicitors.

Dated: 17 March 2023
Slaughter and May
One Bunhill Row
London, EC1Y 8YY
+44 (0)20 7600 1200
(Ref: PIRD/AZXG)
Solicitors for the Company


• ROLEX • ROLEX TUDOR • OMEGA • CARTIER • JAEGER-LE-COULTRE • PATEK PHILIPPE •
VACHERON-CONSTANTIN • AUDEMARS-PIQUET • INTERNATIONAL WATCH CO • IWC • LONGINES • BREGUET •
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ROLEX
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ROLEX TUDOR
ALL GENTS ROLEX TUDOR WATCHES WANTED
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OMEGA
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TM-PA-0323-FP

ANNOUNCEMENT: NEW 22 CARAT GOLD SOVEREIGN

MINTED FOR THE CORONATION OF KING CHARLES III

First sovereign ever to feature a special design for the coronation of a British monarch!

Actual size = 22mm diameter



Solid 22 carat gold the traditional purity of gold sovereigns

Only 1,599 have been minted!

Yours for just **£899**

The first commemorative design gold sovereign ever to celebrate the coronation of a British monarch:

only 1,599 minted, and it can be yours for just £899

AT A GLANCE

- ***The first time a commemorative design gold sovereign*** *has been produced for the coronation of a British monarch!*
- *Minted to commemorate the* ***Coronation of King Charles III*** *– features the Coronation Emblem*
- ***Mintage is only 1,599*** *fewer than 1 in every 17,000 UK households can own one*
- ***Own it for just £899*** *(P&P is free), or by three interest-free instalments:* ***£299 now*** *followed by two payments of £300 each*

The coronation of King Charles III on the 6th of May is set to be one of the most historic events in our lifetime. This is the first coronation of a British monarch for **almost seventy years:** the last time a coronation took place, the average house price was just under £1,900, a pint of beer cost 9p, a pint of milk 4p, and only 8% of households had a fridge. For some people it may be the only coronation they ever witness and that's why an exceptional celebratory gold sovereign coin has been minted.

This new coin is **the first gold sovereign ever** to feature a special design to commemorate the coronation of a British monarch. This world first, and the significance of the event itself, is why the mintage of just 1,599 coins is likely to be subject to considerable demand. Fewer than 1 in every 17,000 UK households can own one!

FIRST SPECIALLY DESIGNED CORONATION SOVEREIGN EVER

The modern sovereign was first produced in 1817 for King George III. Our new monarch, King Charles III, is the ninth monarch for whom gold sovereigns have been produced – but he is **the first to ever have his coronation commemorated** with a specially designed gold sovereign.

On the reverse is the Coronation Emblem which pays tribute to The King's love of the natural world and to the four countries of the United Kingdom. The design brings together the rose of England, the thistle of Scotland, the daffodil of Wales and the shamrock of Northern Ireland into the shape of St Edward's Crown, with which His Majesty The King will be crowned on Saturday, 6th May.

The obverse features a portrait of the King by artist Jody Clark, designer of the fifth (and final) coinage portrait of his predecessor, and mother, Queen Elizabeth II. King Charles III faces the opposite direction to his mother, in accordance with centuries of royal tradition.

HOW TO SECURE YOURS NOW

Hattons of London are accepting orders now for this new 22 carat gold coin **at £899** (P&P is free), subject to availability, and with delivery commencing in the fourth week of April.

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Considerable demand is expected **for this gold coin 'first'**: you may apply with the coupon below or by visiting the web address shown below. Your order is covered by our 60 days complete satisfaction guarantee, which is one of the reasons we have a five star Trustpilot rating (with over 7,800 reviews).

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Major credit cards accepted. Offer subject to availability. UK households only | Your order is covered by our no-questions-asked 60 day complete satisfaction guarantee | Hattons of London has a five star Trustpilot rating | Technical specifications: Coin: sovereign | Date of coin: 2023 | Purity: 22 carat gold | Weight: 8g | Issuing authority: Ascension Island | Diameter: 22mm | Minting Quality: Proof | Hattons of London reserves the right to alter or withdraw this offer before the end date | Hattons of London Ltd, Company 10718280

THE 2023 KING CHARLES III CORONATION GOLD SOVEREIGN

☐ Mr ☐ Mrs ☐ Ms ☐ Miss

Name

Address

Postcode

Telephone

Important if we need to confirm details

Email

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Hattons of LONDON

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☐ **Tick here to pay INSTALMENTS by CREDIT OR DEBIT CARD:** I authorise Hattons of London Ltd to charge my card the details of which are below, the amount of £299 (each) now, followed by two interest-free instalments of £300 each (per coin), approximately one-month apart

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Expiry:

The card must be registered to your address opposite

Signature: ✗

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Thu 27	**Rotterdam, Netherlands**
Fri 28	***Transit Kiel Canal***
Sat 29 - Sun 30	**Wismar, Germany** (overnight) **★RECOMMENDED INCLUDED EXCURSION×: Hamburg, Hanseatic Pearl of Northern Germany**
Mon 31	**Karlskrona, Sweden**

AUGUST 2023

Tue 1 - Wed 2	**Stockholm, Sweden** (arrive early pm - overnight) **★RECOMMENDED INCLUDED EXCURSION×: Highlights of Stockholm & Vasa Museum**
Thu 3	**Helsinki, Finland**
Fri 4	**Kotka, Finland**
Sat 5	**Saaremaa, Estonia**
Sun 6	**Tallinn, Estonia** **★RECOMMENDED INCLUDED EXCURSION×: Tallinn Walking Tour & Concert** Stroll the cobblestone streets of Tallinn's well-preserved Old Town. The architecture is extraordinary, especially massive St. Olav's Church and the Church of the Holy Spirit. After free time for shopping in Town Hall Square, take a seat in St. Catherine's Monastery for a concert of traditional music through the centuries
Wed 7	Relaxing at Sea
Tue 8	**Copenhagen, Denmark** Disembark and transfer to the airport for your flight to **London>** **Book a Penthouse Suite (A) or above and enjoy an UPGRADE to Business Class flight>>**

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Today Patchy cloud and widespread showers, heaviest and most frequent in western areas. Max 15C (59F), min 2C (36F)

Around Britain

Key: b=bright, c=cloud, d=drizzle, pc=partly cloudy du=dull, f=fair, fg=fog, h=hail, m=mist, r=rain, sh=showers, sl=sleet, sn=snow, s=sun, t=thunder
*=previous day **=data not available

	Temp C midday yesterday		Rain mm 24 hrs to 5pm yesterday	Sun hr*
Aberdeen	6	C	6.6	1.2
Aberporth	10	D	4.6	0.0
Anglesey	10	R	4.4	0.0
Aviemore	6	R	2.4	0.1
Barnstaple	11	R	3.6	**
Bedford	12	C	3.2	**
Belfast	13	C	15.2	0.0
Birmingham	12	C	3.6	**
Bournemouth	11	PC	0.0	0.0
Bridlington	10	C	5.0	**
Bristol	11	C	5.0	0.0
Camborne	10	R	9.0	0.0
Cardiff	9	R	10.4	0.0
Edinburgh	12	R	6.8	0.1
Eskdalemuir	8	R	30.6	**
Glasgow	5	D	16.6	0.6
Hereford	10	D	2.8	**
Herstmonceux	12	C	3.2	0.9
Ipswich	11	C	0.0	**
Isle of Man	10	C	12.4	0.0
Isle of Wight	**	**	**	**
Jersey	11	C	2.0	4.4
Keswick	12	R	12.0	**
Kinloss	5	C	3.8	1.8
Leeds	9	R	6.2	**
Lerwick	5	C	2.6	3.0
Leuchars	7	C	9.8	3.6
Lincoln	11	C	3.4	**
Liverpool	11	R	2.2	**
London	13	PC	3.4	0.0
Lyneham	11	C	5.0	0.0
Manchester	12	C	4.4	0.1
Margate	12	PC	1.2	4.6
Milford Haven	10	C	13.2	**
Newcastle	11	R	9.4	**
Nottingham	11	C	4.0	0.2
Orkney	7	R	1.8	4.5
Oxford	13	C	2.8	**
Plymouth	10	R	7.4	**
Portland	10	C	0.8	**
Scilly, St Mary's	11	D	1.8	**
Shoreham	13	C	5.0	1.0
Shrewsbury	12	C	1.4	0.0
Snowdonia	9	R	30.4	**
Southend	12	PC	2.2	1.1
South Uist	6	R	25.2	**
Stornoway	5	R	6.0	2.9
Tiree	9	R	19.0	0.0
Whitehaven	10	C	28.6	0.0
Wick	5	PC	4.0	**
Yeovilton	11	C	1.8	0.0

The world

All readings local midday yesterday

Alicante	18	S	Madeira	20	B
Amsterdam	11	B	Madrid	19	S
Athens	15	PC	Malaga	21	S
Auckland	23	PC	Mallorca	19	S
Bahrain	25	S	Malta	17	PC
Bangkok	31	PC	Melbourne	25	PC
Barbados	29	B	Mexico City	20	T
Barcelona	16	S	Miami	23	C
Beijing	10	S	Milan	13	S
Beirut	19	PC	Mombasa	33	PC
Belgrade	8	B	Montreal	4	B
Berlin	8	S	Moscow	2	SN
Bermuda	18	PC	Mumbai	33	S
Bordeaux	20	S	Munich	5	PC
Brussels	13	S	Nairobi	20	B
Bucharest	6	R	Naples	14	S
Budapest	9	S	New Orleans	16	S
Buenos Aires	29	S	New York	7	PC
Cairo	23	S	Nice	15	B
Calcutta	31	S	Nicosia	21	PC
Canberra	29	S	Oslo	-1	S
Cape Town	33	S	Paris	14	S
Chicago	9	DU	Perth	27	PC
Copenhagen	4	B	Prague	4	PC
Corfu	15	B	Reykjavik	1	S
Delhi	31	S	Riga	1	DU
Dubai	32	S	Rio de Janeiro	29	PC
Dublin	13	B	Riyadh	23	S
Faro	19	PC	Rome	16	S
Florence	16	S	San Francisco	14	PC
Frankfurt	9	S	Santiago	26	S
Geneva	10	S	São Paulo	26	B
Gibraltar	18	PC	Seoul	8	S
Helsinki	2	S	Seychelles	31	PC
Hong Kong	26	PC	Singapore	30	B
Honolulu	28	PC	St Petersburg	2	B
Istanbul	13	B	Stockholm	2	S
Jerusalem	21	PC	Sydney	34	S
Johannesburg	20	B	Tel Aviv	21	PC
Kuala Lumpur	33	PC	Tenerife	23	PC
Kyiv	**	**	Tokyo	16	PC
Lanzarote	20	S	Vancouver	8	PC
Las Palmas	22	PC	Venice	12	PC
Lima	24	B	Vienna	8	PC
Lisbon	18	PC	Warsaw	6	PC
Los Angeles	13	M	Washington	9	PC
Luxor	25	S	Zurich	8	S

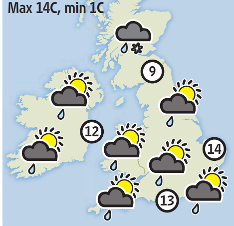
Five days ahead

A largely unsettled period with bright intervals and widespread rain and showers

Tomorrow

Bright spells and showery rain for much of the British Isles, heaviest and perhaps turning wintry across northern Scotland.

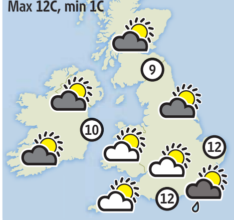
Max 14C, min 1C



Sunday

A few showers clearing southeast England through the morning to leave a mostly dry day with bright and sunny spells.

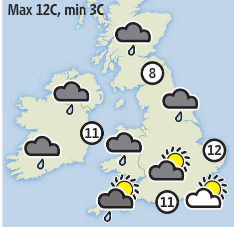
Max 12C, min 1C



Monday

Cloudy with a band of rain moving across Ireland and northwest Britain through the day. Dry with sunny intervals in the southeast.

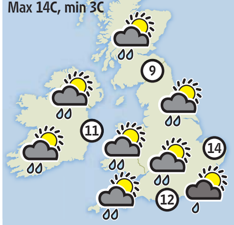
Max 12C, min 3C



Tuesday

A very unsettled day with bright periods and widespread showery rain, heaviest in western areas through the morning.

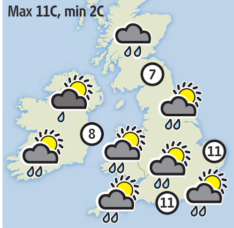
Max 14C, min 3C



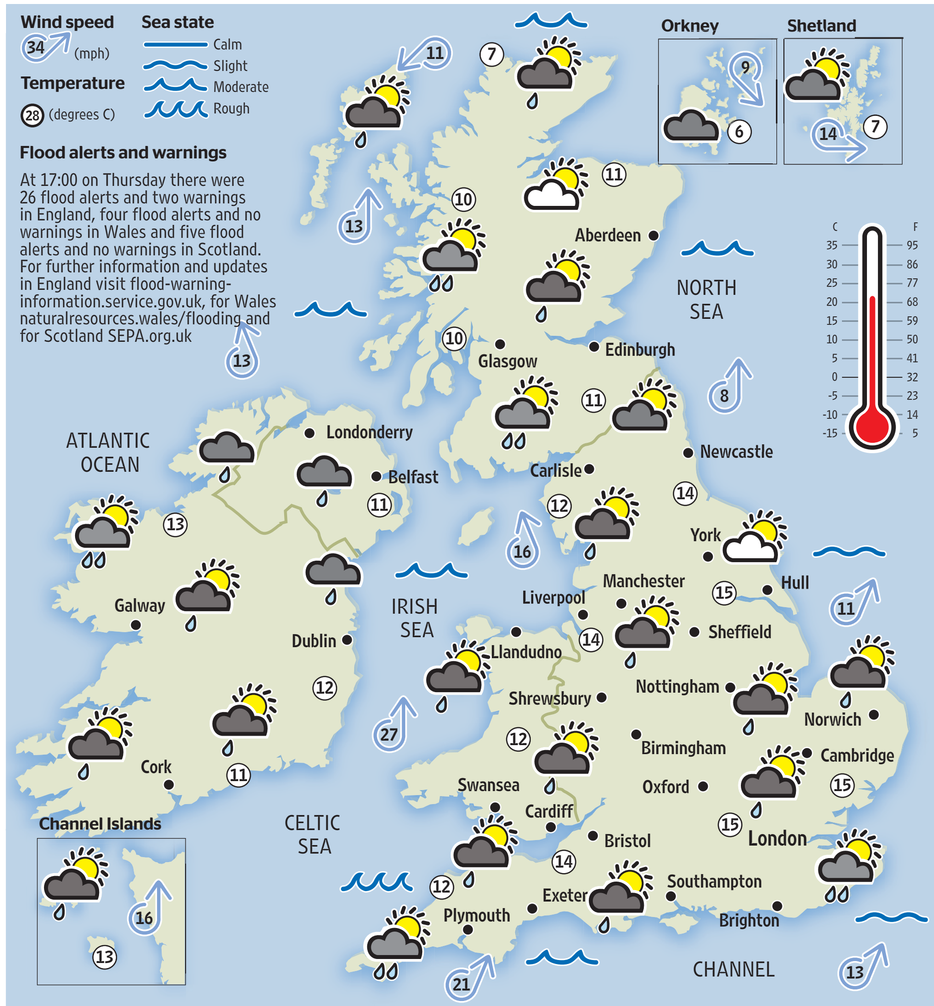
Wednesday

Remaining unsettled with a band of heavy rain moving across the British Isles through the day, heaviest in Wales and western Scotland.

Max 11C, min 2C



The Times weather page is provided by Weatherquest



Flood alerts and warnings

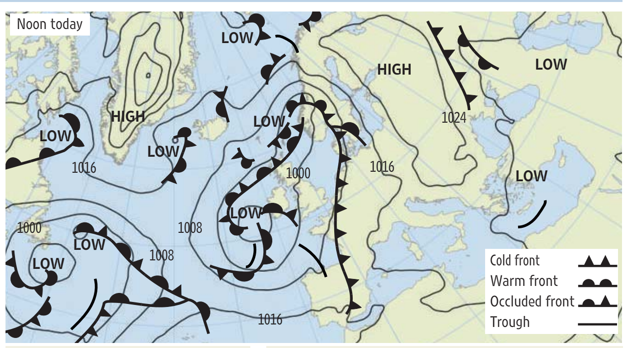
At 17:00 on Thursday there were 26 flood alerts and two warnings in England, four flood alerts and no warnings in Wales and five flood alerts and no warnings in Scotland. For further information and updates in England visit flood-warning-information.service.gov.uk, for Wales naturalresources.wales/flooding and for Scotland SEPA.org.uk

General situation: A cloudy day with rain and showers, most widespread across Ireland and northwest Britain. **Edinburgh and Dundee, Cen Highland, Moray Firth, Aberdeen, Cen N Eng, Borders, NE Eng, E Eng:** A largely dry morning with bright spells. Patchy cloud and scattered showers by the afternoon. Light to moderate southwesterly winds. Maximum 15C (59F), minimum 3C (37F). **Republic of Ireland, N Ireland:** A morning of thick cloud and showery rain. Bright intervals and scattered showers through the afternoon, heaviest and most frequent in the west. Light to moderate south to southeasterly winds. Maximum 13C (55F), minimum 6C (43F). **NW Scotland, NE Scotland, Glasgow, N Isles, Argyll, SW Scotland:** An unsettled day with patchy cloud and showery rain, heaviest through late morning. Light and variable winds, perhaps moderate at times. Maximum 10C (50F), minimum 2C (36F). **Lake District, NW Eng, Wales, IoM, W Mids, SW Eng, Channel Is:** A day of bright periods and scattered showers, heaviest and most frequent by late afternoon. Light to moderate south to southwesterly winds. Maximum 14C (57F), minimum 6C (43F). **London, E Anglia, E Mids, Cen S Eng, SE Eng:** A day of patchy cloud, rain and showers, heaviest through the morning. Light to moderate south to southwesterly winds. Maximum 15C (59F), minimum 7C (45F).

Tides

Tidal predictions.
Heights in metres

Today		Ht		Ht
Aberdeen	09:12	3.4	22:16	3.6
Avonmouth	02:08	9.5	15:15	9.7
Belfast	06:34	2.8	19:32	2.8
Cardiff	02:03	8.9	15:02	9.0
Devonport	00:47	4.3	13:49	4.2
Dover	07:04	5.3	19:46	5.3
Dublin	07:19	3.3	20:15	3.4
Falmouth	00:28	4.0	13:21	3.9
Greenock	07:17	2.6	20:37	2.7
Harwich	07:01	3.1	19:42	3.0
Holyhead	06:08	4.5	19:06	4.5
Hull	01:27	5.7	14:09	5.8
Leith	10:23	4.4	23:21	4.6
Liverpool	06:45	7.4	19:37	7.5
London Bridge	09:06	5.8	21:54	5.6
Lowestoft	05:20	2.2	17:30	2.1
Milford Haven	01:31	5.2	14:24	5.2
Morecambe	06:59	7.3	19:50	7.4
Newhaven	06:40	5.1	19:34	5.3
Newquay	00:30	5.2	13:21	5.3
Oban	02:11	3.0	15:07	2.9
Penzance	--:--	--	12:54	4.2
Portsmouth	07:17	3.8	20:10	3.9
Shoreham	06:55	4.7	19:49	4.9
Southampton	08:37	3.6	21:25	3.7
Swansea	01:38	7.0	14:29	7.1
Tees	11:30	4.4	--:--	--
Weymouth	01:59	1.3	14:55	1.3



Synoptic situation

Occluded fronts associated with a low-pressure system to the west of Ireland will bring some thick cloud and showery rain across Ireland and western Scotland, most widespread through the morning. The rest of the British Isles will have bright intervals and scattered showers, heaviest and most frequent through late afternoon.

Highs and lows

24hrs to 5pm yesterday

Warmest: Helen's Bay, 15.6C
Coldest: Cairnwell, -4.4C
Wettest: Eskdalemuir, Dumfriesshire, 30.6mm
Sunniest: Manston, Kent, 4.6hrs*

Sun and moon

For Greenwich
Sun rises: 06.09
Sun sets: 18.07
Moon rises: 04.44
Moon sets: 12.00
New Moon: March 21

Hours of darkness

Aberdeen	18:44-05:46
Belfast	19:00-06:01
Birmingham	18:44-05:45
Cardiff	18:49-05:50
Exeter	18:51-05:51
Glasgow	18:53-05:54
Liverpool	18:48-05:49
London	18:37-05:38
Manchester	18:45-05:46
Newcastle	18:42-05:44
Norwich	18:31-05:32
Penzance	18:59-05:59
Sheffield	18:42-05:43

Weather Eye
Paul Simons



There are occasions when the weather can play astonishing tricks. Claire McCorquodale was hiking to the summit of Beinn Dearg in the Scottish Highlands on February 26 when she saw that the distant round hills of Glen Affric looked very strange.

"Couldn't understand what I was looking at, mountains looked like icebergs," she tweeted.

The sight of those icebergs in the Highlands, which appeared in a clear blue sky on a bitterly cold day, was not, however, some wild flight of the imagination.

The bizarre scene was a phenomenon called a Fata Morgana, named after the legendary sorceress Morgan le Fay, King Arthur's half-sister, who could conjure up magical towering castles out of thin air to confuse her enemies, and then just as magically make the castles melt away and vanish.

The Fata Morgana is a very elaborate mirage. Layers of cold and much warmer air are sandwiched together like a multi-layered cake and can refract light repeatedly to create fantastically distorted images, stretched out, often one on top of another and seemingly floating in the sky. These images can change rapidly as the layers of different air move up and down, or simply disappear into thin air.

As Henry Wadsworth Longfellow wrote in his poem *Fata Morgana* (1873): "Fair towns with turrets high,/ And shining roofs of gold,/ That vanish as he draws nigh,/ Like mists together rolled."

A Fata Morgana can often appear in very cold weather and turn distant hills, islands, cliffs and other landscapes into shapes elongated upwards as if stretched like gum.

Some of the whackiest images are ships that seem to float upside down in the sky on top of real vessels. Craig Clements took a photograph of an upside down ship near Victoria Harbour in British Columbia (see it at https://atoptics.co.uk/fz150.htm).

These sorts of images could have been the origin of the legendary Flying Dutchman, the ghost ship doomed to sail for ever.

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Sport

Brutal, barbaric – and massively popular among young sports fans

UFC has 'exploded' in popularity over past year – and London is hosting it this weekend, writes **Tom Kershaw**



CHRIS UNGER/GETTY IMAGES

Edwards lands a head kick to defeat Usman last year; the Briton defends his UFC title against the American tomorrow. Below: Liverpudlian flyweight McCann

That one of Britain's greatest sporting feats last year occurred inside a cage in Salt Lake City, Utah, may come as a surprise to most. Leon Edwards, a 31-year-old mixed martial artist from Birmingham, had been losing comprehensively to Kamaru Usman, the Ultimate Fighting Championship's (UFC) dominant star, when his head kick knocked his opponent unconscious in the final minute of a fight in August.

It was both a gruesome act and a spectacular upset — indicative of the contradiction at the heart of a sport that has grown a febrile fanbase but often left foreign visitors to its bloody world feeling queasy. Edwards's winning kick was replayed millions of times online and trended on social media but rarely reached terrestrial television or national newspapers. He was a star of combat sports but could walk down the street untroubled.

It is the kind of strange, parallel existence the UFC has had ever since its inception; it was perceived to be so archaic and unruly that the late senator John McCain once compared it to "human cockfighting". Some may argue not much has changed. The very nature of the UFC, in which athletes can strike each other on the ground and force their opponents to "tap" via techniques with grisly names such as "rear naked choke" or "guillotine", is gory enough to revolt even those without squeamish tendencies. When Dan Hardy gained notoriety as one of the early British fighters on the circuit, the first question people often asked was: "How is this even legal?"

A sense of ambivalence, if not outrage, has meant that the UFC's rapid growth has occurred out of mind and sight for many. Tomorrow, though, it will inch ever further across the threshold when Edwards faces Usman in a rematch at the O_2 arena. It will be the UFC's third London show in the past year alone.



The previous two, headlined by Tom Aspinall, the Salford-born heavyweight, both broke records for revenue generated at the gate by a sporting event. "Over the past 12 months, there's been a bit of an explosion," Aspinall says. "It was an underground sport and not many people knew what it was, but now it's really becoming mainstream."

If rags-to-riches tales have so often provided the greatest defence against boxing's critics, mixed martial arts (MMA) is no different. Edwards describes himself as "the blueprint for what it can do for people". Born into poverty in Jamaica, he moved to Birmingham as a child, only for the grief over his father's murder to lead him down a path of gang violence. "I knew nothing about MMA growing up," he says. "I wasn't really into fight sports, but it was like I found the father figure I'd been missing in the gym. It changed my life."

Edwards is expected to earn about £1 million for tomorrow's fight, his 16th in the UFC. After it was sold to Endeavour, a media conglomerate, in 2021, the UFC's voluble president, Dana White, estimated the company was worth "probably nine or ten" billion dollars. Last year it "broke record after record when you take any metric: ticket sales, ratings, social media, profitability, sponsorship," Lawrence Epstein, the UFC's chief operating officer, says.

The audience is young, voracious and global; up until visiting Rio de Janeiro in January, the UFC claimed it had sold out 29 consecutive shows. It is the combat sport for a modern generation, with grave risks, unpredictable results and peaks of adrenaline converted into GIFs and memes.

"The truth is the UFC has benefited from the failings of boxing," Hardy says. "It bought out its competitors and swept up all the talent, so they have legitimate rankings and people can broadly agree who's the best in the world. Boxing is too political, it's sporadic. In MMA the best fights happen and there's a continuation of the narrative. The downside is the fighters don't have the same autonomy [as in boxing] or the same kind of pay."

Before getting to the caveats, it is best to put into context quite how extraordinary the UFC's growth has been. Martial arts have existed in different guises for centuries, but the UFC was founded only 30 years ago. Its creation was due largely to the Gracies, a revered fighting family credited with inventing Brazilian jiu-jitsu. Rorion Gracie, dubbed "the toughest man in the United States",

> The UFC has benefited from boxing's failings. It bought its fighters and swept up all the talent

helped to devise a tournament between eight different mixed martial artists. His brother Royce was chosen to represent the family's craft.

"We had a quest to find out which style was best and the only way was to fight," Royce says. "That's how the UFC was created. There were no rules pretty much — just no eye-gouging and no biting — but it had to be that way [with] the violence, [the] competition. It was almost barbaric."

Royce won the inaugural tournament, which drew an audience of almost 90,000 on pay-per-view, but within a few years the novelty of watching a Dutch karateist knocking out a 500lb sumo wrestler had worn off. By the time the UFC was bought by the brothers Lorenzo and Frank Fertitta in 2001 for $2 million (then about £2.8 million), the UFC had succumbed to fierce political pressure and had been banned in 45 states. "So many talk about building a company from the ground up, but [the UFC] was ten stories underground," Epstein says. "It was a tarnished brand."

The Fertitta brothers sold their stake in the UFC to Endeavour in 2016 for roughly $4 billion (about £3.2 billion), but growth at the beginning of their ownership was gradual to the point of being non-existent. Years were spent tackling regulatory issues and implementing a uniform set of rules. "People weren't sure if it was real or not," Ariel Helwani, the most prominent UFC reporter, says. "Nobody knew who the fighters were. They were in a cage with 4oz gloves and no shoes. I remember doing an interview with [the boxing promoter] Bob Arum. He said it's just a bunch of skinheads."

It was a self-financed reality series, *The Ultimate Fighter*, that proved to be the UFC's saving grace. It followed a group of fighters who lived, trained and competed against each other to win a six-figure UFC contract. When the programme aired on Spike TV in 2005, a niche cable network with a male audience, it became an instant hit. By the end of the following year, the UFC's annual revenue had risen from $48.3 million to $180 million. "If you look at any chart, that was the inflection point," Epstein says.

The UFC's upward trajectory has been relentless ever since. As word spread, transcendent personalities emerged, most notably the Irishman Conor McGregor. After years of being shunned by major networks, the UFC began airing on Fox Sports in 2012 and moved to ESPN in 2018 in a five-year deal worth $1.5 billion.

The trepidation of sponsors fell away while an aggressive social media strategy engrossed a predominantly young audience, particularly after the UFC's bullish and controversial return at the height of the pandemic on an island in Abu Dhabi. "We had five or six weeks where in the US it was just us and Korean baseball on television," Epstein says. "We exposed our product to a ton of new people. It's paid dividends for us and will, frankly, for many years to come."

The enduring criticism as wealth has flooded in is how it trickles down to the fighters. Epstein insists "fighter pay is growing faster than our business", but Helwani is adamant the UFC's biggest stars are significantly under-rewarded compared with boxers of a similar stature. "[The UFC] are very tough to deal with; the contracts aren't very fighter-friendly, to put it mildly," he says. "There aren't a tonne of options out there for them, so they can only say so much; they don't have a collective voice."

Francis Ngannou and Nate Diaz, two of the UFC's biggest stars, recently left the company after long-running disputes over their contracts. Before them, few established fighters had dared speak out for fear of reprisal. "I look back and feel like they robbed me," Hardy, who earned £10,000 when he fought at the O_2 arena in 2009, says. "A lot of people behind the scenes don't give a damn about the fighters and are happy to make handfuls of cash off the people doing the majority of the work. They have a monopoly on the sport."

The brand is so formidable that six former fighters have even filed an antitrust lawsuit against the UFC, but one area in which it has earned praise is its championing of female athletes. Molly McCann, a flyweight from Liverpool, was not always welcomed into boxing gyms despite being a standout amateur, and was inspired to pursue MMA after watching Ronda Rousey compete in the UFC's first women's fight in 2013.

"I went into university the next day and said, 'I'm done,'" McCann says; her nickname, "Meatball", refers to the shifts at the sandwich shop Subway that spurred her career. "I had this blind faith. Everyone started at the same baseline and was treated the same, which made it a lot easier to apply myself. I don't think women's boxing is given the respect it deserves — in the UFC we were accepted."

It is another of the UFC's odd contradictions that it can be perceived as modern, even progressive, while profiting from violence that exists in a cage and may have once befitted the Colosseum. "It's an art, a skill, it's five Olympics disciplines in one," McCann says. Hardy is confident the perception of MMA being a refuge for "thugs" has been permanently shattered.

A stigma remains, as it does for all combat sports, but what is impossible to dispute, on a weekend when the UFC will cast a shadow over boxing again, is that it continues to grow. "It's never going to be everyone's cup of tea," Helwani says. "But it's still a multibillion-dollar business."

Bellingham and Mount key to reboot

Paul Joyce
Northern Football Correspondent

The coming weeks will invariably feel long and drawn out for Jürgen Klopp, though he will be anything but idle. There are, after all, players to sign and futures to resolve.

Will Liverpool's reboot involve Jude Bellingham? Bellingham and Mason Mount? Or perhaps Moisés Caicedo, Matheus Nunes, João Palhinha, Alexis Mac Allister, Nicolò Barella, Gavi, or another of the multitude of midfielders linked with a move to Anfield recently.

Change would have been in the air even if the Champions League second leg against Real Madrid had defied all logic. As it was, a 1-0 loss and elimination with a whimper against the holders should focus minds.

Liverpool supporters will hope that a rivalry is now resumed with familiar foes over Bellingham, who would have watched events at the Bernabéu and the original tie at Anfield three weeks ago, when the Spaniards secured a 5-2 success, and been mindful of the gap between two of his potential suitors.



Borussia Dortmund's teenage tyro remains the apple of Klopp's eye and the Liverpool manager will believe that with the 19-year-old on board, what has appeared at times as a chasm would narrow overnight. He considers Bellingham a transformative figure and that is a vision that Klopp would be keen to share with the England midfielder.

The price of such a deal would be eye-wateringly expensive, though. For every rumour that suggests Bellingham will eventually arrive — and there are plenty of those swirling around Merseyside — there is someone else who is prepared to exercise more caution.

They wonder if spending more than £100 million on a single player is the equivalent of putting too many eggs in one basket for a club who need two midfield additions to go straight into the starting line-up next season. Injuries restricted Klopp's options on Wednesday night, admittedly, but Cody Gakpo, the £37 million attacker signed from PSV Eindhoven in January, and the 37-year-old James Milner were the No 8s.

Liverpool have spent heavily previously, and lavishing £75 million on Virgil van Dijk in January 2018 would be the equivalent of a £100 million deal now, given how prices have kept on rising.

However, where Van Dijk and the goalkeeper Alisson, who was signed for £65 million six months later, were signings that resolved a problem in a specific position, there is an alternative train of thought that one player is not going to fix the issues in Klopp's engine room.

If Liverpool need at least two midfielders — and there are also defensive recruits to consider — then it is largely to smooth a problem of their own making. Overtures were made to recruit Aurélien Tchouaméni from Monaco last summer, but he chose the lure of Real and was on the substitutes' bench as Carlo Ancelotti's side progressed into another quarter-final in their favourite competition.

Not pivoting to plan B left Liverpool exposed; a little like how in 2020-21 they did not replace Dejan Lovren and then suffered injuries to Van Dijk, Joël Matip and Joe Gomez which scuppered their title defence.

Mount's contract stalemate with Chelsea means that he is likely to be offloaded with a year remaining on his deal this summer. He may cost half the Bellingham fee, but the list of clubs interested in the 24-year-old will also be long and there are personal terms on top of the transfer fee to be considered.

A long list of names is being surveyed to ensure money is spent in the best way possible. What is clear is the willingness of Liverpool's owner, Fenway Sports Group (FSG), to oversee the strategic signings that it believes can restore the club's standing.

SOCCRATES IMAGES/GETTY IMAGES



Liverpool's recruitment team and Klopp, left, are known to want Bellingham, but a move to sign the midfielder needs to be weighed against who else is available

Neither FSG — nor perhaps Klopp, despite his disappointment at this season — would accept the portrayal of Liverpool as a crumbling, ageing team who need a complete rebuild. Roberto Firmino is a confirmed departure, Naby Keita and Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain will follow, while Milner is also out of contract.

Meanwhile, Ibrahima Konaté, Darwin Núñez, Gakpo, Diogo Jota, Harvey Elliott and Stefan Bajcetic, the 18-year-old midfielder who will miss the rest of the season because of a thigh injury, have all been recruited in recent seasons in the knowledge that a period of transition was looming.

There remains plenty of talent in the starting line-up too, notwithstanding an unexpected drop-off in some individual performances.

What also appears apparent from the way that Klopp has been talking is that FSG's commitment this summer is independent of its search for extra investment in the club, a process that was formalised in November and is continuing. It is independent, too, of player sales. Should it transpire that there are outgoings — Philippe Coutinho's £142 million move to Barcelona five years ago offset the expensive arrivals of Van Dijk and Alisson — then that could mean there is more to spend.

Van Dijk: We need top four

Paul Joyce
Northern Football Correspondent

Virgil van Dijk has said that Liverpool must qualify for the Champions League if they are to attract new talent and revitalise the club's fortunes.

The Liverpool defender reacted to Wednesday's elimination at the hands of Real Madrid by steeling himself for the fight to compete among Europe's elite sides again next term.

The inconsistency that has troubled Liverpool all season has left them sixth in the Premier League, six points behind fourth-placed Tottenham Hotspur. They do have a game in hand and still have to host Antonio Conte's side.

Jürgen Klopp's men do not have a game this weekend and then face Manchester City, Chelsea and Arsenal in eight days after the international break.

The importance of the final 12 matches of the campaign is not lost on Van Dijk, who said that reinforcements were needed. "If we want to be where we have been the last five years, we need quality imports," he said. "We still have a lot of games to play and we want to be in the Champions League. I think that will also help to attract the best players in the world."

Álvarez signs new City deal

Julián Álvarez has signed a contract extension with Manchester City, committing to the club until 2028.

The 23-year-old forward — a World Cup winner with Argentina — joined from River Plate last year and has scored ten times in 33 appearances during his first season at the Etihad Stadium, despite competing with Erling Haaland for a place in Pep Guardiola's side. He scored four times for Argentina as they triumphed in Qatar.

His initial contract was due to expire at the end of the 2026/27 campaign but after a strong start to his City career, an additional 12 months have been added.

"This is a very proud moment for me and my family. For a club like City to put their faith in me like this is amazing," Álvarez said.

Txiki Begiristain, the director of football, paid tribute to Álvarez for his attitude and development since moving to Manchester.

"We saw at the World Cup what a special talent he is," Begiristain said. "He is the ideal blueprint for a young footballer and an inspiration to anyone looking to make their way in the game. He has shown already here in England that he has outstanding movement and natural goalscoring instincts."

Infantino 'inspired by Rwanda memorial'

Martyn Ziegler
Chief Sports Reporter, Kigali

Gianni Infantino has been re-elected unopposed as Fifa's president after telling delegates that a visit to a memorial for the victims of Rwanda's genocide inspired him to not give up on his first campaign to become head of football's world governing body.

Yesterday Infantino was elected for another four-year term at Fifa's annual congress in Kigali after being praised by Rwanda's president, Paul Kagame, for his "exceptional leadership".

The 52-year-old was elected to applause from the 600 or so delegates — though the Norwegian group remained sitting and silent in a protest at some aspects of Infantino's presidency.

In his speech to the congress, Infantino told a story about his 2016 campaign, when he went to the final of the African Nations Championship in Rwanda only to be told by African delegates that they would not support him in the presidential election. He said that memories of his visit to the memorial for the victims of the 1994 genocide — when more than 500,000 people from the minority Tutsi ethnic group were killed — gave him the strength to continue.

He said: "Of course, I was pretty depressed, about to give up … [but] I thought about it and I remembered my visit to the memorial — and you all should go to visit the memorial, all of you. And I said, 'Who am I to give up?' What this country has suffered and how this country came back up is inspiring for the entire world.

"So I certainly couldn't give up because somebody was saying something. The next day I attended the match, I continued to campaign, and I was elected the Fifa president a few months later."

In a press conference after his speech, however, Infantino denied making an association with the genocide. "I find it really incredible that you have interpreted what I said as making an association with one of the most terrible, terrible tragedies that happened in humanity and this country with anything that happened in my life," he said. "I would never make a comparison between a human tragedy and my life. All I'm saying is this country is so inspiring for so many people, for what has been done, that when we come with our own problems, we should just be more humble."

Fifa chief criticises BBC, ITV

Martyn Ziegler

The president of Fifa, Gianni Infantino, has criticised public broadcasters for offering rights fees for the women's World Cup that are a fraction of the sum they pay for the men's tournament.

The BBC and ITV are understood to have offered £9 million for the rights to the tournament being hosted by Australia and New Zealand in June and July — about 15 times less than they paid for the 2022 World Cup in Qatar.

The UK agreement with Fifa has still to be signed off but the matches have to be on free-to-air TV as the tournament is a "listed event".

Infantino announced that the prize money for the women's tournament will rise from $30 million (£24.8 million) in 2019 to $110 million this year, with $40 million in preparation fees and compensation to clubs — amounting to 25 per cent of the men's prize money. He added that some countries' public broadcasters were offering 100 times less to cover the women's World Cup than the men's.

"We are not going to sell the women's World Cup at these prices," he said.

Mark Bullingham, the FA's chief executive, said he agreed with Infantino on that issue, but would push Fifa to make human rights a bigger factor when it came to tournament bids.

"Some of the rights fees — we see it domestically — are so low that although we have made really good progress it means the gap is so big," he said. "We want to continue working with Fifa on human rights. The time when people will have the most leverage over any country in any scenario is going to be when they are going to bid."

Maradona's spirit driving Napoli

Owen Slot



Chief Sports Writer

CHRIS BRUNSKILL/FANTASISTA/GETTY IMAGES



Even beyond the constant din and the extended, thunderous eruptions of joy as Napoli's appetite for goals sends them sailing unscathed into the Champions League quarter-finals — beyond the many assaults on the senses here in Naples — it is the football itself that stands out. It strikes you almost as unmistakably as the presence of Diego Maradona, for he is very much still a part of Napoli too.

Their hallmark is their audacity. Call it confidence, if you will. When Napoli brought Eintracht Frankfurt to heel at the Diego Armando Maradona Stadium on Wednesday night, it was the peppering of high-risk passes that eventually broke German resistance.

Napoli's ball retention is poor, but how can it be otherwise when you are so frequently hitting tight no-look angles? Khvicha Kvaratskhelia — or "Kvaradona" as he has been dubbed — is given freedom to run at defences and there is a fabulous murmur of anticipation as he cuts in from the left wing. And this is also audacious and he sometimes loses possession too.

There is a beguiling impatience about it all. They're not especially interested in passing around the outside of the box. It's like a roundabout conversation when you just want someone to get to the point. Napoli are always getting to the point.

Yet you won't see Manchester City or Real Madrid or Bayern Munich, or whoever Napoli get in the quarter-final draw today, being so candid, or allowing Napoli anything like the 60 per cent possession they had against Frankfurt, or permitting this football to flourish. Napoli's progression will be fascinating.

Their football has been good enough to stretch a lead in Serie A that means they are already pretty much out of sight. The goal that Kvaratskhelia scored against Atalanta on Saturday was arguably his greatest masterpiece yet and it helped to put Napoli 18 points ahead and further on towards a first *scudetto* since Maradona's second in 1990. Now that the Champions League is getting serious, can they do to Europe what they have done to Italy?

On Tuesday, Pep Guardiola called Napoli "the strongest team in Europe". "I don't agree with his little games," was the response of Luciano Spalletti, the Napoli manager, after seeing off Frankfurt 3-0. "He wants to put pressure on us, everyone does. How can you put Napoli ahead of Manchester City, who spend 900 million while we spend nine?"

Spalletti didn't give those figures a currency, but the value was in Napoli's eternal message. Naples lies above the bridge of the boot of Italy but feels keenly that it has been regarded it as the dirt on the sole of the shoe. Yet this spirited old city now has a football team who have been merrily raising two fingers towards the wealth of the Italian north and is aware of a discrepancy, now, with most of the rest of the continent.

Maradona's was always a voice for the downtrodden, a challenge to the establishment, and that is, in part, why he is still deified here. Ten years after he fled the city, under the cloud of cocaine abuse, they were still missing him so much that they retired his number, the No 10. Two and a bit decades on and he is an immortal.

San Gennaro is the saint of Naples. Maradona is the other. His face still appears on vast murals around the city. In the Spanish quarter, a film set of narrow flagstone streets, with laundry tumbling from sliver-thin balconies, his image hangs from flags and sits in apartment windows. It is almost everywhere you look. Barmen and women still treasure old photos — *il Dio* and me — on their walls, and they recall him arriving in the middle of the night to drink there. Did he really drink everywhere?

"One could feel," Maradona once said, "that it was forbidden for the south to win against the north." Here in Naples, they love the way that, for the first time in their history, he forced a rethink. He gave them pride and identity. They love that Spalletti's team is now doing the same. There are clear differences. Many of Maradona's old team are still here. Giuseppe Bruscolotti, who handed his captaincy to Maradona, used to run a betting shop; Raffaele Di Fusco, the goalkeeper, and Ciro Muro, the midfielder, still do local TV; Ciro Ferrara's cancer charity still supports a local hospital.



Evidence of Naples's love of Maradona is everywhere, from the Spanish quarter, top, to the Bar Nilo, which has strands of his hair on display, circled below. Osimhen, above, scores against Frankfurt

The movement of the modern footballer means that has changed now. Napoli are no longer a team of Neapolitans. Only Gianluca Gaetano is really a local and he rarely starts.

Yet it seems that they have nevertheless embraced the same cause. They play under the same abuse from the ultras of their northern rivals. The ultras still shout "*Lavatevi*" at them: "Go wash yourselves." In their chants, they also hope for a return of the cholera outbreak that hit Naples in 1973 and they beg for Vesuvius to erupt and bury the city for good.

Football culture does not seem to have become any more reasonable here. Hatred has just extended its reach online.

How do Napoli fans counter this? Often by joining in with the chants — as an ironic response. Yes, as the Naples city centre witnessed on Wednesday, they can be drawn into street fighting too.

There is nothing better, though, than their football team winning the battle for them, and that is what they have now. They study the fixture list to work out which game will deliver them the *scudetto* — and they pray for April 23 at the Allianz Stadium in Turin. Where better to seal it than against Juventus — the Juve whose wealth always made them such formidable foes, the Juve now charged with cheating the system?

Vincenzo Credendino, a TV presenter on CalcioNapoli24, refers to a poem by Giacomo Leopardi, a poet everyone studies at school. His poem *Sabato del Villaggio* — "Saturday in the Village" — is about how Saturdays are always happy because there is Sunday, a day of rest, to follow. "Napoli fans are living a long Saturday," he says, "because we all believe that Sunday will come."



In the Bar Nilo, opposite the statue of the god of the Nile, a Maradona relic draws fans from all over the world. A few strands of the hair from Maradona's head rotate slowly in a small perspex box that sits in front of a Maradona shrine. Argentinians come here, see it and weep.

The owner, Bruno Alcidi, has a photo of himself and Maradona behind the bar. Of course he does. He also has a nativity scene with Maradona in the crib and the sheep before him in the colours of Juve, Inter and AC Milan. The best day of his life, he says, was July 5, 1984, when he was one of 70,000 to fill the stadium to welcome Maradona to their city. And all he did was juggle the ball.

The hair, he says, dates back to 1987 and a return flight from Milan. Maradona had been sitting at the front; as Alcidi exited the plane after the flight, he saw the hairs still on Maradona's headrest. He was made for life.

How does this imminent *scudetto* compare to the two that Maradona delivered? "It is the same," Alcidi says. He grew up believing it simply wasn't possible for Napoli to be champions. "After 33 years, there is a whole generation who are going to win a *scudetto* who have been thinking the same."

Credendo is one of that generation who came of age hearing endlessly about Maradona, but were too young to remember seeing him play. "But we feel that we know him," he says. "We all grew up watching the same VHS." Here in the stadium that bears Maradona's name, the two generations come together. Before every game, they sing the same song in Maradona's memory.

There is another song, getting a lot of airtime in Naples, about Victor Osimhen, which salutes the Nigerian striker as a deity. Everyone here is loving it, but no one is buying it. Even if he is one of Spalletti's most successful projects, a strong leader of the line, a consistent goalscorer; even if he did score two of the goals against Frankfurt. It is like the editorial in *Corriere dello Sport* on Monday about Kvaratskhelia. Had the time come, the newspaper asked, to take the No 10 out of retirement and give it to the young Georgian superstar? The response was: "Never!"

Spalletti is clear about this too. Even though they felt the connection to the Maradona team, he said there was no mirror image: "There is a difference," he said, "because they had Maradona, and no one in my team can win matches on their own like Maradona. We can overcome that because of how we work as a team."

In *Corriere dello Sport* on Thursday morning, they called it "the Naples fairytale". It is the second such fairytale and we know not how this one ends.

Pressure forces Southgate into pragmatic pick



Manager knows that he can't afford poor start to Euro 2024 qualifying – hence Toney's inclusion, writes **Henry Winter**

On the eve of the European Championship in 2021, Gareth Southgate wrote an emotional letter in *The Players' Tribune* to "Dear England" which heralded his players as "role models".

It's one of the reasons why manager and squad have been so popular. By and large, they represent the country well. It's a theme that Southgate has returned to occasionally, lauding his players as sending out a good message about standards.

But now, on the eve of qualifying for next year's European Championship, Southgate has turned pragmatist and picked Ivan Toney in his squad to face Italy and Ukraine, knowing that he cannot risk a poor start to qualifying. This squad reflected the pressure that Southgate is under after criticism of some of his tactics and game management at the World Cup. Southgate briefly considered standing down before deciding to stay on for Euro 2024. But he has to hit the ground running in group C, and Naples will be intimidating on and off the field. Hence the need for Toney.

After Harry Kane, Toney is the most in-form centre forward in the country. Marcus Rashford, whose goal for Manchester United against Real Betis last night took his season's tally to 30 for club and country in 48 games, is deemed best off the left. Toney, 27, has excelled for Brentford this season with 17 goals in 26 games. But he was charged with 232 betting breaches in November and another 30 in December. He accepted that he broke FA rules but denies some of the charges. A disciplinary commission will deliberate next month on the evidence and Toney's observations and decide the length of his ban from all football activity, with suggestions that it could be up to six months. So Toney is unlikely to be available when face Malta and North Macedonia in June but these are less challenging group C games for England. Italy and Ukraine are far more forbidding. Southgate needs Toney now. He offers the prospect of instant impact from the bench if England are struggling.

It shows the weakness of the FA that Southgate was not given any guidance about picking a player facing a ban for betting. It also shows how committed the FA is to Southgate. In dismissing criticism of Toney's selection, Southgate said that the striker was available to Brentford. But playing for a club is a contract; playing for England is an honour. England players are role models as Southgate has stated in the past.

"There hasn't been a trial or any judgment so I don't know on what basis we wouldn't pick him," Southgate said. The "basis" is the scale of the offence, the fact that Toney has already admitted partial culpability, and that it sends a message that Southgate is not taking seriously the breaking of rules on gambling. Of course, Southgate does take such rules seriously, but he has to take England getting a point or more in the Diego Armando Maradona Stadium more seriously.

Southgate has also picked Kyle Walker despite the Manchester City right back allegedly flashing in a bar. Walker has not been charged with any offence. "I have to be careful on being the moral judge on things," Southgate said. "We have had a couple of long conversations, we want him with us, but we know when you're an England player there is an even higher bar on how you conduct yourselves and what is expected. We are not taking those decisions lightly."

The issue here is more about consistency and also a grey area in FA response; there used to be guidelines. Southgate is loyal to players who have never let him down on the pitch, and Walker has been one of England's most consistent performers over the past five years. Even with Reece James making a welcome return (and Ben Chilwell on the left), Walker is a reliable campaigner for Southgate.

Southgate is fortunate to have an exceptional array of talent to call upon, certainly the deepest squad available to an England manager in living memory, thanks to the good work being done in academies and in the FA's age-group pathway celebrated last year with the under-19 side becoming champions of Europe. The fact that Southgate can leave out the in-form trio of Ben White, James Ward-Prowse and Ollie Watkins highlights the available quality.

That Southgate can ignore the in-form Brighton & Hove Albion contingent of Lewis Dunk, Solly March and Adam Webster also shows the level of competition. England still have issues in central defence, and still need a left-footed centre back, and will hope that Levi Colwill, on loan at Brighton from Chelsea, trains on. Southgate has overlooked those playing in Serie A. In the past seven games Fikayo Tomori has started for AC Milan, they have conceded only three goals. Tomori's knowledge of the Italians could have been useful.

England squad and fixtures

Goalkeepers J Pickford (Everton), N Pope (Newcastle), A Ramsdale (Arsenal).
Defenders B Chilwell (Chelsea), E Dier (Tottenham), M Guehi (Crystal Palace), R James (Chelsea), H Maguire (Man Utd), L Shaw (Man Utd), J Stones (Man City), K Trippier (Newcastle), K Walker (Man City).
Midfielders J Bellingham (Dortmund), C Gallagher (Chelsea), J Henderson (Liverpool), J Maddison (Leicester), M Mount (Liverpool), K Phillips (Man City), D Rice (West Ham).
Forwards P Foden (Man City), J Grealish (Man City), H Kane (Tottenham), M Rashford (Man Utd), B Saka (Arsenal), I Toney (Brentford).

Euro 2024 qualifiers
Thursday, March 23 Italy (a), 7.45pm, Channel 4
Sunday, March 26 Ukraine (h), 5pm, Channel 4

Foreign influx hurting England team, says manager

Tom Roddy

Gareth Southgate has raised concerns over the lack of talent available to England in the Premier League as he called up Ivan Toney for the upcoming Euro 2024 qualifiers.

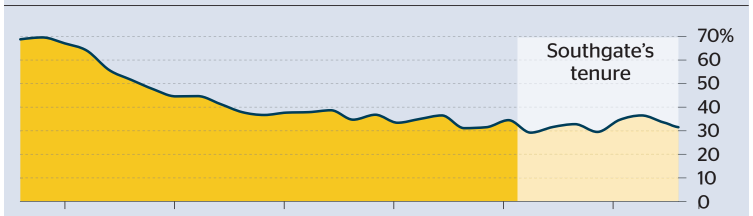
The England manager, who left out Liverpool's Trent Alexander-Arnold and Arsenal's Ben White, warned that the decline in representation within the top flight will cause selection problems in the next four years, claiming that limited left back options are already forcing him to consider players from the Sky Bet Championship.

Southgate named a 25-man squad for England's matches against Italy next Thursday and Ukraine next Sunday, their first games since they were eliminated in the World Cup quarter-finals. It includes Toney and Kyle Walker, who are both facing off-field controversy. Raheem Sterling has been left out because of fitness issues but Southgate decided against including Alexander-Arnold and White, with the latter having left Qatar after a bust-up with Southgate's assistant, Steve Holland.

Toney, who turned 27 yesterday, has an impending disciplinary hearing with the FA for breaching betting rules, while Walker is potentially facing a criminal investigation after allegedly exposing himself in a public bar.

Southgate was keen to highlight the declining English representation in the Premier League, citing a 28 per cent figure for Englishmen starting domestic top-flight games and a figure of 66 players available for selection, while the Champions League has more players from Brazil and Portugal than England.

Percentage of minutes by English players in Premier League



"We are shorter than the other big nations on depth of selection," Southgate said. "In certain positions those numbers are deteriorating rapidly. That's not a concern for me in the next 18 months but in the next four or five years we have to be really careful. I think we've got four left-footed left backs in the league so we will have to start looking in the Championship or elsewhere because the additional part for us is we don't export many players."

Southgate also raised concerns about the lack of English players being signed by Premier League clubs during the January transfer window, as he said the issue will complicate England's chances of winning a World Cup. "We are pouring millions into youth development and we are seeing some benefit in the quality of players but talent has to meet opportunity to get there," he said.

Southgate questioned whether Chelsea's Mason Mount and Reece James would have got their breakthrough had the club not been under a transfer embargo in 2019, while Marcus Rashford's Manchester United debut came in 2016 after an injury crisis.

Rashford is one of Southgate's attacking options for the qualifiers, alongside Toney. The Brentford striker is facing 262 charges from the FA and has admitted to some offences but is challenging others.

Southgate pointed out that Toney is playing for his club, adding: "I don't know on what basis we wouldn't pick him. I saw his game at Arsenal where I thought he was outstanding and he deserves his opportunity."

Rashford ensures smooth progress

Real Betis	0
Manchester United *Rashford 56*	1

Manchester United win 5-1 on aggregate

Paul Hirst

FRAN SANTIAGO/GETTY IMAGES



Rashford is only ten goals behind United's most prolific European goalscorers after a fizzing long-range effort against Betis

For a 55-second period halfway through the second half, Marcus Rashford probably wanted the ground to swallow him up. Embarrassingly for a forward of his pedigree, he had wasted Manchester United's best chance of the night so far, scooping the ball well over Rui Silva's bar into the second tier of the stand at the Estadio Benito Villamarín from 15 yards.

But less than a minute later, he followed up the miss with an act of skill that demonstrates why he is an elite forward and why he is so vital to United's chances of winning the Europa League. Rashford sent a venomous low shot flying past Silva from 25 yards. As soon as the ball hit the back of the net, Real Betis's minute hopes of causing a shock comeback victory disappeared.

United would instead win the tie 5-1 on aggregate. If Rashford keeps on scoring goals like the one he scored here, no one will want to be pitted against Erik ten Hag's team when the quarter-final draw is made today.

The technique that Rashford used, striking down and across the ball, gave the shot a hint of fade and, even at full stretch, Silva stood no chance of stopping it.

The Rashford of last season would have probably sulked after his close-range miss and allowed the rest of the match to pass him by. He had also missed another opportunity in the first half. But this year, thanks to a hard summer's work in pre-season and the influence of Ten Hag and his coaching staff, we are seeing a much improved version of Rashford.

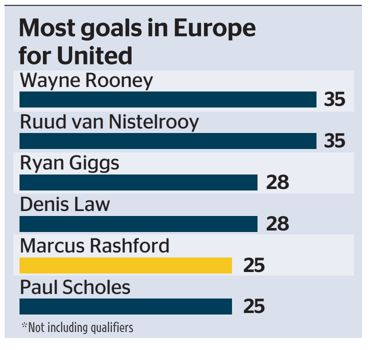
His goal tally proves as much. Five goals last season, 27 this term. Breaking the 40-goal barrier is not beyond the 25-year-old from Wythenshawe.

When (or if) United's new owners take control, they need to make a contract extension for Rashford a priority. He has one year left on his present deal.

"Rashy missed some chances, but he kept his belief, he kept trying and got his reward," Ten Hag said. "If he keeps the focus, the energy, with the way that we play, he will get in scoring positions and then it's about him and he has the ability to finish."

David de Gea made two excellent saves to remind new Spain head coach Luis de la Fuente of his abilities before he announces his latest squad today. "You can always rely on him," Ten Hag said of the goalkeeper, who was excluded from Spain's World Cup squad. "He is having a very good season."

Despite taking a 4-1 lead into the second leg, Ten Hag named a strong team. There was a surprise full debut for Facundo Pellistri, though, 893 days after joining United from Peñarol.



Twenty seconds in, Pellistri burst down the right wing and delivered a teasing cross but no one was in the middle to convert.

Wout Weghorst then came within inches of turning in Casemiro's flick on from a corner. By that point, thousands were still taking their seats, perhaps because of the early kick-off time.

Those who were seated made a racket. "Si se puede" [Yes we can] they chanted. Betis are a passionately supported club. Many of the apartment blocks in the Seville neighbourhood of Triana, where their main support base is, are whitewashed with the odd splash of green to match the team's colours.

The home fans were given more reason to believe an upset was on the cards when Juanmi sped clear of Harry Maguire, but he shot a yard wide.

Betis were doing everything they could to keep the game moving. As soon as the ball went out of play, a ball-boy launched another one to the throw-in taker immediately.

The 41-year-old Betis forward Joaquín, who won his first Spain cap when Pellistri was three months old, glanced the post with a deflected shot. Ten Hag looked concerned.

Aitor Ruibal cut open the United defence to send Juanmi through on goal again, but De Gea came off his line to narrow the angle.

United started to regain control towards the end of the first half and should have gone ahead in injury time. Pellistri flicked Bruno Fernandes's free kick towards goal. Weghorst only had to apply the slightest of touches to help the ball over the line but he failed to make any contact and Betis cleared.

After De Gea saved brilliantly from Pérez's header at the start of the second half, United went on the attack.

Pellistri rode a challenge and fed Fernandes, who nudged the ball to Rashford. Betis had a man over so Rashford was free to take his time and pick either corner of Silva's goal but instead he swept the ball well over the bar.

Soon after, Rashford made amends. Initially there looked to be little danger when the forward collected Casemiro's pass on the left wing, but he got the ball out from under his feet with three quick touches before driving the ball across Silva and into the far corner.

Ten Hag substituted Rashford four minutes later. Fernandes, a booking away from a one-match suspension, was then replaced by Anthony Elanga. Casemiro, also one yellow card shy of a suspension, stayed on the pitch, however, and despite a couple of misses — one particularly bad one from Pérez — United remained in front, quietened the crowd and sauntered to victory.

Real Betis (4-2-3-1): R Silva 6 — Y Sabaly 6, E González 6, G Pezzella 6, A Vinicius 5 (J Miranda 26min, 5) — G Rodríguez 6 (A Guardado 66, 5), W Carvalho 7 — A Ruibal 6 (B Iglesias 59, 6), Joaquín 6 (S Canales 59, 6), Juanmi 6 — A Pérez 4 (W José 58, 5).
Manchester United (4-2-3-1): D De Gea 8 — A Wan-Bissaka 7 (D Dalot 75), H Maguire 7, L Martínez 7 (V Lindelof 75), T Malacia 6 — Fred 6 (M Sabitzer 60, 6), Casemiro 7 — F Pellistri 7, B Fernandes 7 (A Elanga 69, 6), M Rashford 8 (J Sancho 60, 6) — W Weghorst 5. **Booked** Pellistri
Referee S Jovanovic (Serbia). **Attendance** 54,643.

Ineos bidders at club today

CONTINUED FROM BACK

whether more than one group will then progress to the next stage. While Sheikh Jassim did not attend yesterday's meetings, he sent a team of senior advisers. They included Shahzad Shahbaz, president of the Nine Two Foundation set up to purchase United, and Fady Bakhos, the Sheikh's senior personal adviser.

Also with them was Sam Powers, global head of technology, media and telecoms at Bank of America and Yasir Shah, a managing director with the same organisation. Acting for United were members of Raine Group, the New York bank overseeing the potential sale.

Rival bidders from Ineos will arrive for their meetings today, with Sir Jim Ratcliffe set to be accompanied by the former British Cycling and Team Sky boss Sir Dave Brailsford, who now holds a senior sporting role with Ineos.

The Ineos co-owners Andy Currie and John Reece will also attend, along with Ineos chairman and chief executive Rob Nevin and Jean-Claude Blanc. Blanc worked for Qatar-owned Paris Saint-Germain as deputy chief executive after joining from Juventus.

Ratcliffe's group wants to take the Glazers' 69 per cent majority stake, while Sheikh Jassim hopes to secure 100 per cent of the club with a debt-free purchase.

Results

Football

Europa League
Round of 16, second legs

Arsenal (1) **1** **Sporting** (0) **1**
Xhaka 19 — Gonçalves 62
Sent off: M Ugarte (Sporting) 118
(aet; 3-3 on agg; Sporting win 5-3 on pens)

Fenerbahçe (1) **1** **Sevilla** (0) **0**
E Valencia 41 (pen) — 44,775
(Sevilla win 2-1 on agg)

Ferencvaros (0) **0** **B Leverkusen** (1) **2**
Diaby 3
Adli 81
(Bayer Leverkusen win 4-0 on agg)

Feyenoord (3) **7** **Shakhtar** (0) **1**
Giménez 9 — Kelsy 87
Kökcü 24, 38 (pen) — 37,500
Idrissi 49, 60
Jahanbakhsh 64
Pereira 66
(Feyenoord win 8-2 on agg)

Freiburg (0) **0** **Juventus** (1) **2**
33,420 — Vlahovic 45 (pen)
Chiesa 90+5
Sent off: M Gulde (Freiburg) 44
(Juventus win 3-0 on agg)

Real Betis (0) **0** **Man United** (0) **1**
54,643 — Rashford 55
(Manchester United win 5-1 on agg)

Real Sociedad (0) **0** **Roma** (0) **0**
Sent off: L Fernández (Real Sociedad) 90+8
(Roma win 2-0 on agg)

US Gilloise (1) **3** **Union Berlin** (0) **0**
Teuma 18, Amani 63
Lapoussin 90+4
Sent off: J Haberer (Union Berlin) 80
(Union Saint Gilloise win 6-3 on agg)

Europa Conference League
Round of 16, second legs

West Ham (1) **4** **AEK Larnaca** (0) **0**
Scamacca 20
Bowen 47, 49
Mubama 65
Sent off: L Ledes (AEK Larnaca) 45
(West Ham win 6-0 on agg)

Other results AZ Alkmaar 2 Lazio 1 (AZ win 4-2 on agg); Djurgarden 0 Lech Poznan 3 (Lech Poznan win 5-0 on agg); Nice 3 Sheriff Tiraspol 1 (Nice win 4-1 on agg); Sivasspor 1 Fiorentina 4 (Fiorentina win 5-1 on agg); Slovan Bratislava 2 Basel 2 (aet; agg 4-4; Basel win 4-1 on pens); Villarreal 0 Anderlecht 1 (Anderlecht win 2-1 on agg).

Darts

Cazoo Premier League, seventh round
Motorpoint Arena, Nottingham: Quarter-finals (England unless stated): D Van den Bergh (Bel) bt N Aspinall 6-4 (*legs*); G Price (Wales) bt J Clayton (Wales) 6-4; M van Gerwen (Neth) bt P Wright (Scot) 6-1; C Dobey bt M Smith 6-4.

Golf

DP World Tour SDC Championship
Eastern Cape, South Africa: Leading first-round scores (South Africa unless stated): **67** K Krogh Johannessen (Nor), D Ravetto (Fr). **68** C Syme (Scot). **69** S Cronje, J Brun (Fr), J Luiten (Neth), M Leth Simonsen (Den), N Bachem (Ger). **70** S Valimaki (Fin), B Follett-Smith (Zim), A Venter, L Albertse, A Levy (Fr), M Baldwin (Eng), D Brown (Eng).

Women's European Tour Aramco Series
Laguna National, Singapore: Leading first-round scores (Great Britain and Ireland unless stated): **67** N Garcia (SA). **68** P Bouchard (Fr), L Grant (Swe), K Spilkova (Cz), E Givens, C Wolf (Austria). **69** D Kang (US), E Young, N Broch Estrup (Den), A Sauzon (Fr), S Schober (Austria), T Cheenglab (Thai). **70** A van Dam (Neth), K Telfer (SA), A Hewson, B Law, E Grechi (Fr), C Williams, S Witt (Ger), E Spitz (Austria).

Rugby league

Betfred Super League Castleford Tigers 14 Leeds Rhinos 8.

Snooker

WST Classic
Morningside Arena, Leicester: First round (England unless stated; *denotes amateur): J O'Connor bt J O'Neill 4-1; N Saengkham (Thai) bt I Burns 4-3; S Bingham bt Ng On Yee (HK) 4-0; Fan Zhengyi (China) bt A Petrov (Est) 4-0; A McGill (Scot) bt Peng Yisong (China) 4-0; Pang Junxu (China) bt J Kendrick 4-2; J Lisowski bt L Heathcote 4-3; Si Jiahui (China) bt D Dale (Wales) 4-2; Lyu Haotian (China) bt M Judge (Ire) 4-1; B Woollaston bt D Emery (Wales) 4-2; S Donaldson (Scot) bt Z Surety 4-2; B Hawkins bt B Pinches 4-0; H Vafaei (Iran) bt J Astley 4-2; O Lines bt M Mann 4-0; N Robertson (Aus) bt *L Simmonds 4-2; M Stevens (Wales) bt V Sarkis (Br) 4-1; B Mertens (Bel) bt R Walden 4-1; M Allen (N Ire) bt P Lines 4-0; M Davis bt F O'Brien (Ire) 4-2; M Gould bt *A Higginson 4-2.

Tennis

BNP Paribas Open
Indian Wells, California: Quarter-finals: Men D Medvedev (Russ) bt A Davidovich Fokina (Sp) 6-3, 7-5. **Women** M Sakkari (Gr) bt P Kvitova (Cz) 4-6, 7-5, 6-1; E Rybakina (Kaz) bt K Muchova (Cz) 7-6 (4), 2-6, 6-4; I Swiatek (Pol) bt S Cirstea (Rom) 6-2, 6-3.

Fixtures

Football

Premier League Nottingham Forest v Newcastle (8.0).

Sky Bet League One Sheffield Wednesday v Bolton (7.45).

Cinch Championship Arbroath v Morton (7.45).

Rugby league

Betfred Super League Huddersfield Giants v Wigan Warriors (7.45); St Helens v Hull (8.0); Warrington Wolves v Leigh Leopards (8.0).

Rugby union

RFU Championship Bedford v Richmond (7.45).

Snooker

Morningside Arena, Leicester WST Classic.

Knockout blow exposes lack of Arsenal depth

Henry Winter
Chief Football Writer

Arsenal	*Xhaka 19*	1
Sporting Lisbon	*Gonçalves 62*	1

Aet, 3-3 on agg; Sporting win 5-3 on pens

This was a bruising night for Arsenal, physically and psychologically. The scything challenges they endured as this remarkable game wore on, briefly felling Gabriel Martinelli, Bukayo Saka and Leandro Trossard, were nothing to the emotional pain inflicted by the nerveless, ruthless Portuguese side in the shoot-out. Arsenal were knocked off their stride, then knocked out of the Europa League.

This was a game that contained almost everything. It was end to end, there was a goal from nearly 50 yards, two waterfalls as the roof leaked, a red card and then the shoot-out. Sporting Lisbon were so clinical, nailing all of their five kicks. Each one of Rúben Amorim's players who took responsibility clearly had total belief in his technique.

Jeremiah St Juste set the tone, ramming his kick past Aaron Ramsdale. Arsenal's captain, Martin Odegaard, sent Antonio Adán the wrong way, Ricardo Esgaio made no mistake but nor did Saka. The scoreboard showed 2-2, and Arsenal fans believed. They whistled loudly as Gonçalo Inácio walked towards the spot. Amorim sat at the back of the dugout unable to watch.

Ramsdale got to Inácio's kick but could not keep it out. Trossard calmly, emphatically brought Arsenal back level at 3-3. The whistling rose as Arthur Gomes placed the ball down, stepped back and then struck his kick just past the diving Ramsdale. The whistling ebbed. The spotlight turned to Martinelli, the pressure intensified, and he struck his kick too close to Adán. The Sporting goalkeeper, the man of the match for his earlier saves especially from Gabriel headers, pushed Martinelli's kick away.

Sporting were now in total control and it was left to Nuno Santos to steer them into the quarter-finals. The winger exuded certainty as he addressed the ball, no real surprise as he had scored with a rabona against Boavista at the weekend. Santos finished in style here, finishing off Arsenal with a kick placed too fast for Ramsdale to stop.

Arsenal were crestfallen. The Premier League is their target but this European run had given some of the reserves an outing. What this showed is that some of the reserves like Fábio Vieira are not elite calibre yet. Arsenal looked so much better when Odegaard replaced Vieira.

Yet Arsenal began well, taking the lead through Granit Xhaka after 19 minutes. It came from a move that showed the confidence and teamwork of Mikel Arteta's side. Gabriel collected the ball at the back and slipped it forward to Jorginho. Gabriel Jesus came short, dragging Sporting's centre backs out of their sentry stations, Xhaka began accelerating through midfield and Martinelli went long down the left, running on to Jorginho's pass which Esgaio failed to cut out. Martinelli cut inside, eluding Ousmane Diomandé and shot right-footed. Adán managed to keep the ball out but it fell kindly to Xhaka who ignored Diomandé's attempt to block and whipped the ball left-footed past the defender and beyond Adán.

Xhaka celebrated by thumbing his nose and waggling his fingers, keeping a promise he had made to his daughter Ayana to score, according to his wife Leonita on Instagram.

Arsenal looked good. Even with an element of rotation, and three players going off by the start of the second half, two of them, Takehiro Tomiyasu and William Saliba injured, the system was the same. Jesus, easing his way back after injury, lasted a half and would have scored but for Adán's reflexes twice.

Jesus was replaced by Trossard but the main change at the break was to Sporting's ambition. They were far more front foot. Rob Holding blocked Paulinho's effort but then came an extraordinary goal from Pedro Gonçalves. He never made much of a mark on English football during his time at Wolverhampton Wanderers, playing only once as a substitute in the Carabao Cup in 2018, but his contribution after 61 minutes here at the Emirates will never be forgotten. Jorginho and Xhaka were trying to play their way forward from the centre circle but Xhaka's return was underhit, and Paulinho dived in. Jorginho threw himself to the ball, catching Paulinho, and the referee, Antonio Mateu Lahoz, played a good advantage. Gonçalves collected the ball in the centre circle, took a touch and then brought his right foot powerfully down into the ball and sent it 45 yards through the air and over the backpedalling Ramsdale. Arsenal looked stunned. Sporting fans leapt up and down even more, and set off a green smokebomb.

Arteta sent on Saka and Thomas Partey for Reiss Nelson and Jorginho, then almost lost his goalkeeper when Ramsdale saved Marcus Edwards' shot with his chin and was rocked back. Ramsdale required medical attention but was deemed fit to continue. As the game flowed from end to end, water cascaded from the roof, forcing 50 or so drenched fans to vacate their seats until the north London Niagara abated.

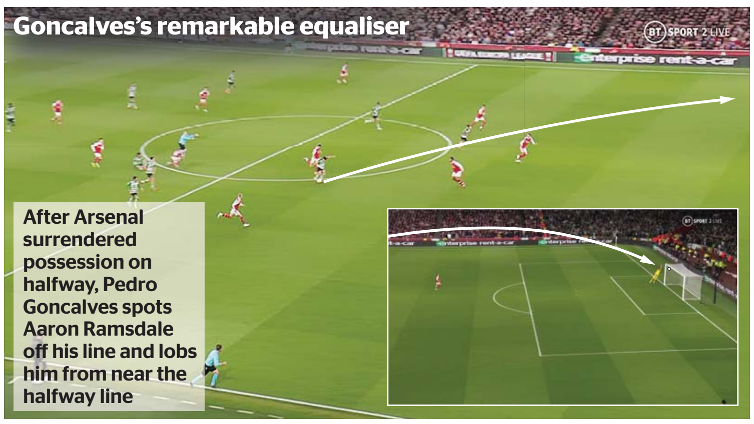
Arsenal almost scored in the first period of extra time when Youssef Chermiti played the ball blindly, and Trossard raced through the middle, denied only by the hand of Adán who diverted the Belgian's shot on to the post. Odegaard, the additional substitute permitted in extra time, finally replaced the tiring Vieira and immediately began whipping the fans up.

Sporting tackles were now flying in. Manuel Ugarte walked for his second yellow, this time for poleaxing Saka (after his first on Martinelli), before Sporting showed their dead-ball class in the shoot-out.



EDDIE KEOGH/UEFA/GETTY IMAGES

Gonçalves spotted Ramsdale off his line and let fly from 45 yards to equalise for Sporting and take the tie into extra time



How shoot-out unfolded

Sporting Lisbon		Arsenal	
St Juste	✓	Odegaard	✓
Esgaio	✓	Saka	✓
Inácio	✓	Trossard	✓
Gomes	✓	Martinelli	✗
Santos	✓		
5		3	

Arsenal (4-2-3-1): A Ramsdale 7 — T Tomiyasu 6 (B White 9min, 6), W Saliba 6 (R Holding 16, 5), Gabriel 6, O Zinchenko 8 — Jorginho 7 (T Partey 66, 6), G Xhaka 7 — R Nelson 6 (B Saka 66, 6), F Vieira 5 (M Odegaard 100, 8), G Martinelli 6 — G Jesus 8 (L Trossard 46, 5). **Booked** Vieira, Xhaka, Holding.
Sporting Lisbon (4-4-2): A Adán 8 — J St Juste 6, O Diomandé 5, G Inácio 6, M Reis 6 (N Santos 94, 6) — R Esgaio 5, M Ugarte 7, P Gonçalves 8 (D Essugo 94, 6), F Trincão 7 (A Gomes 115) — M Edwards 7 (M Tanlongo 119), Paulinho 6 (Y Chermiti 89, 5). **Booked** Ugarte, Diomandé.
Sent off Ugarte.
Referee A Lahoz (Spain).

Coaches' cajoling reaps reward from fit-again Scamacca

West Ham Utd	*Scamacca 21, Bowen 47, 49, Mubama 65*	4
AEK Larnaca		0

West Ham win 6-0 on aggregate

Europa Conference League

Gary Jacob

This was not the competition West Ham United had in mind for Gianluca Scamacca when they shelled out £35 million for him last summer. Five of the Italy forward's eight goals have come in the Europa Conference League this season, underlining his struggles against superior sides.

But his strike last night did at least show a willingness to improve after he had been given a kick up the backside in recent weeks by David Moyes, his club manager, and Roberto Mancini, who warned him that his Italy place was in jeopardy unless he regularly plays.

Scamacca's response and a first goal for the academy graduate Divin Mubama gave Moyes a warm glow to accompany West Ham United's serene passage into the Europa Conference League quarter-finals.

Jarrod Bowen struck twice after the break before he and Scamacca made way for Mubama to come on and backheel a third as West Ham won 6-0 on aggregate. Mubama, 18, was a left back when he joined the east London club aged eight but he became a forward at 12 and has not looked back. He has scored 49 goals at youth level over the past three seasons.

"I am buzzing, I'm over the moon and it's something I've been waiting a long time for," Mubama said. "I'm glad to continue the goalscoring streak and I'm buzzing. I just want to thank God and the gaffer for giving me the opportunity to play."

A year ago today Moyes had one of his best West Ham results when they knocked out Sevilla to reach the Europa League quarter-finals. Things have been tougher for him recently but this win was made easier when AEK Larnaca were reduced to ten men in a bizarre incident on the stroke of half-time. Gustavo Ledes was shown a red card after the VAR intervened to ask Georgi Kabakov, the Bulgarian referee, to review a tackle on Pablo Fornals, who pleaded the case for his opponent.

Scamacca might have been disappointed not to have stayed on to add to his tally. He arrived at West Ham with a reputation for being at the centre of controversy and last month he parted with his agent Alessandro Lucci, who took the unusual step of writing that their trust was broken on social media. It became clear he might want to return to Italy after just one season. He has not featured in the Premier League for more than two months, in part because of a knee injury, and Moyes has been left to complain about his fitness, finding the right place in the area and whether he uses his 6ft 5in frame to the best advantage.

His shot sneaked through the goalkeeper's legs after he was slipped in by Manuel Lanzini and he was denied a second goal by an offside flag. After the break he kicked air trying to convert a cross and then had a weak shot saved for Bowen to follow-up and score from an angle. Two minutes later Bowen flicked home a cross from Aaron Cresswell, which was the cue for Moyes to make a triple change and withdraw both goalscorers.

Moyes has given his players five days off before they return for a relegation fight. "We blew them away in the second half," Moyes said. "Scamacca's goal was a wee bit fortunate but he needs goals for confidence. He did a lot of good things. Divin, with his energy and running, excites every time."

West Ham (4-3-3): A Areola 6 — B Johnson 5, K Zouma 6 (L Laing 68min, 5), A Ogbonna 6, A Cresswell 6 — M Lanzini 7, T Soucek 6 (F Potts 68, 5), L Paquetá 7 (M Cornet 54, 6) — J Bowen 7 (D Mubama 54, 6), G Scamacca 6 (D Ings 54), P Fornals 6. **Booked** Mubama.
AEK Larnaca (4-2-3-1): K Piric 4 — I Casas 5, M González 5 (K Christoforou 46, 5), N Tomovic 5, N Englezou 5 — R Mamas 6, G Ledes 4 — G Naoum 5 (I Faraj 81) O Sanjurjo (P Pons 66, 5), M Jakolis 5 (O Altman 66, 5) — N Nikolic 6 (R Lopes 66, 5). **Sent off** Ledes.
Referee G Kabakov (Bulgaria).

Hamilton: I don't plan to leave Mercedes but team need a kick

Tom Kershaw

Thick plumes of smoke formed the backdrop to last year's Saudi Arabian Grand Prix when a missile attack at a nearby oil refinery left the drivers deliberating the merits of a boycott. This time around, with heightened security on the ground and an "iron shield" in the sky, it is a different kind of fog from which the teams are seeking to emerge.

There was a fraught and defeatist air to the grid a fortnight ago in Bahrain after Max Verstappen and his dominant Red Bull threatened to turn this new season into a "no contest" after a single round. In truth, a revamped Aston Martin aside, nobody even came close to landing a punch. Ferrari's fresh promises of reliability blinked under the earliest examination when Charles Leclerc was forced to retire. After Lewis Hamilton finished nearly one minute behind Verstappen, the mood in Mercedes' garage bordered on mutinous.

Those poor omens have paved the way for sweeping conclusions, but Jeddah's unforgiving, high-speed street circuit can still elicit drama and surprise. Verstappen, whose arrival here was delayed by a lingering stomach bug, knows that well after crashing in qualifying in 2021 before a thrilling duel with Leclerc last year. In the Dutchman's absence, others spoke with admittedly cautious optimism of turning over their own leaf.

"I will win again, it's just going to take some time," Hamilton said; his calls for collective spirit at Mercedes were unavoidably tinged by the sombre realisation that his chances of winning an eighth world title already seem remote. "I think in the race [Red Bull] weren't pushing, so I think they're even quicker than it seemed," he added. "We have it as them [being] a second and a half faster in the race per lap. Something like that.

"They will run away with it mostly this year unless Ferrari can stop them. At some point during the year, we're hopeful we might be able to close the gap, but at that point it will probably be too late in terms of fighting for a championship."

It is a vast chasm and so galling that questions of Hamilton finishing his career away from Mercedes dominated the post-mortem. The 38-year-old sought to dampen such speculation here, although there was a sharp edge to his tongue, even when reining in his remarks at being ignored by the team's engineers.

"Looking back, it wasn't the best choice of words," he said. "I still have 100 per cent belief in this team. It is my family, so I don't plan on going anywhere else, but we all need a kick."

BRYN LENNON/FORMULA 1/GETTY IMAGES



Hamilton says that he will win again in Formula One but has called for patience

Saudi Arabian Grand Prix
Jeddah Corniche Circuit
Qualifying, Saturday, 5pm
Race, Sunday, 5pm
TV: Sky Sports F1

If Mercedes' only real chance of victory relies on their competitors breaking down, as Hamilton admitted himself with a rueful smile, it is not such a fanciful thought in the case of Ferrari. Frédéric Vasseur, the team's new principal, was brought in to remedy Ferrari's enervating struggles with reliability. However, Leclerc's race was blighted by a faulty electronics power unit component and the sense of tumult has carried across the desert, with the Monégasque driver receiving a ten-place grid penalty after a third unit needed to be fitted.

Leclerc remained confident Ferrari can begin turning a corner this weekend after that false start, although his team-mate, Carlos Sainz Jr, who finished fourth in Bahrain, was franker when discussing the doubts that remain. "For sure, we are relatively concerned," he said. "It's not the way you want to start a season, with a penalty in race two, breaking the battery in the first week — clearly we are not happy with that. It's the first time we have seen this failure in a very long time, so we were caught by surprise.

"I have a feeling we're going to be a bit more competitive. Enough to beat the Red Bulls? Given how strong they were in Bahrain, it's going to be extremely difficult." Aston Martin will wield a quiet hope of doing so after an extraordinary leap this off-season that has been the envy of the grid. Fernando Alonso, though, spent much of Thursday afternoon attempting to temper expectations, comparing Friday's practice sessions to a "test day".

"I wish I could have an answer," the 41-year-old, who is seeking a first win since the Spanish Grand Prix in 2013, said. "Will the performance in Jeddah be the same as in Bahrain? We will know on Sunday night."

It is uncertainty that Formula One executives and fans crave, as opposed to the fading sight of a Red Bull rear wing and a carbon-fibre facade of competition. The past two years in Jeddah have proved there are few circuits with a greater capacity to shock, although not always in a positive manner, and as his fellow drivers praised the virtues of returning here, Hamilton took exception to that, responding: "The opposite to everything they said."

He refused to elaborate much further, other than admitting the sport would have continued on without him if he were to have staged a boycott of his own. For the time being, he will be left hoping that doesn't become a metaphor for his season on the track too.

'Dream come true to play home Ashes'

CONTINUED FROM BACK

BBC Radio Sussex. "When we went to Australia we weren't quite at our best. I really feel we could get one over them [this summer] and give them a good hiding," he added.

One of the enduring images that summed up England's dismal performance down under in the winter of 2021-22 was Robinson being bowled while backing away towards square leg in the final Test of the series at Hobart. The seamer also had his fitness questioned by Jon Lewis, then bowling coach, and suffered a number of injury setbacks at the start of last summer. Since then, though, he has become a mainstay of England's attack and will be a key player in the hunt to reclaim the urn.

In the 16 Tests he has played, Robinson has claimed 66 wickets at an average of 21.27 and since his return from injury has often been trusted to take the new ball. He was the leading wicket-taker among the seamers in England's 3-0 series win in Pakistan.

Robinson's new-found fitness, combined with his skill, means he is likely to feature in most of the five-match Ashes series. "It's a dream come true to be involved in a home Ashes. It doesn't get much better than that," Robinson said.

While a number of the England team will be in India for the Indian Premier League at the start of the English domestic season, Robinson is expected to play a handful of matches for Sussex before the start of the international summer, which begins on June 1 with a four-day Test against Ireland at Lord's.

Taylor back in action with Vegas bout against López

Boxing Josh Taylor is nearing an agreement to fight Teófimo López in Las Vegas on June 10, bringing to an end almost 18 months of inactivity since his controversial victory over Jack Catterall. After Taylor considered moving up to welterweight, and changing trainer, his rematch with Catterall was scheduled to take place on March 4. A torn plantar fascia in January led to a further postponement, and since then his promoter, Bob Arum, has moved to match him with López.



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Wales old guard get one last hurrah

Steve James

TIMOTHY ROGERS/GETTY IMAGES; DAVID ROGERS/GETTY IMAGES



Taulupe Faletau
Age: 32. Club: Cardiff.
Caps: 99
Position: No 8
Height: 6ft 2in
Weight: 17st 5lb



Leigh Halfpenny
Age: 34. Club: Scarlets.
Caps: 98
Position: Full back
Height: 5ft 9in
Weight: 13st 2lb



Justin Tipuric
Age: 33. Club: Ospreys.
Caps: 92
Position: Flanker
Height: 6ft 2in
Weight: 16st

Warren Gatland has sometimes been utterly ruthless when it comes to selection — just ask Brian O'Driscoll about the final Test of the 2013 British & Irish Lions tour to Australia — but there is an element of compassion, maybe even sentimentality, to the Wales squad Gatland has picked to face France in Paris on Saturday.

The head coach was keen to stress that up to eight players could be playing their final Six Nations match, which is why he has opted for a much more experienced side than of late. He wants to give them an opportunity to say farewell properly to the grand old tournament they have graced so successfully over the past decade or so.

The eight he was referencing were probably George North (although he is only 30), Dan Biggar, Rhys Webb, Ken Owens, Alun Wyn Jones, Justin Tipuric, Taulupe Faletau and Leigh Halfpenny, who is on the bench. All of them are Lions, all of their names are inked into Welsh rugby's hall of fame, with Faletau on Saturday becoming the fourth — after Jones, North and Biggar — to reach 100 caps for his country.

Against France Halfpenny will win his 99th cap, Tipuric his 93rd and Owens his 91st. It is some group. That the 34-year-old Webb will win only his 40th cap is a mystery explained only by injury and the Welsh Rugby Union's controversial 60-cap rule. The scrum half was magnificent in the 29-17 victory over Italy in Rome at the weekend.

"That's some of the thinking behind the selection — guys who have been great servants to Welsh rugby but are probably involved in their last Six Nations game," Gatland said. "The message to them is [to] enjoy the occasion and the moment. For a lot of them, it might be the last time they do that."

There are six changes from the Italy match, two enforced by injury. Liam Williams suffered a knock to the shoulder in Rome, so Louis Rees-Zammit is given an opportunity at full back, his third start in the position for Wales, while the blind-side flanker Jac Morgan damaged an ankle in training in Nice on Tuesday so Aaron Wainwright takes his place.

"It's just getting some of our players with some speed in," Gatland said of Rees-Zammit. "We want to see how he goes. There's not a lot of depth in Wales in terms of that position."

Wainwright scored the only try of his international career against France in the 2019 World Cup quarter-final and Gatland has long been a fan of the 25-year-old.

"He's still a young man," Gatland said. "He's got some size about him and he's dynamic and explosive. Probably his biggest 'work-on' is staying switched on and engaged for 80 minutes. We know what he can do with ball in hand. It's just those moments when, say, there's a kick battle and it's your job to get back and work hard — [that's] the work-on for him."

Biggar was always going to return at fly half once he had recovered from a back injury as Owen Williams has not quite looked of the requisite class (he is on the bench, though), but at centre Gatland has decided to omit his two promising 20-year-olds, Joe Hawkins and Mason Grady, and instead partner Nick Tompkins with North.

Italy often carved open the Welsh midfield last weekend and the prospect of the two youngsters suffering even more at the hands and feet of Jonathan Danty and Gaël Fickou must have been a daunting one. Gatland, though, denied that he was protecting Hawkins and Grady.

"That wasn't the thinking behind that," he said. "They will have learnt a lot from last week's experience. They're building that combination. It was just to get some fresh legs. We were happy with Joe and Mason but they're a bit banged up in terms of the games they've played."

With Dafydd Jenkins replaced by Jones at lock (Jenkins is on the bench) and Christ Tshiunza not having travelled to Nice, the young bucks that have been exposed in this competition will be conspicuous by their absence from the starting line-up. Tommy Reffell will again make do as a replacement. There was surprise at Tshiunza's omission from the 32-man squad this week, since he started against Scotland and England, but Gatland explained it was due to a combination of factors. The 21-year-old is based in England, at Exeter Chiefs (with those representing countries other than England who are not in international matchday squads having to return to their English clubs) and facing university examinations.

"The reasoning behind him not being here was that we didn't pick him for the Italy game, so he stayed behind," Gatland said. "He's got a lot going on at the minute with exams and dissertations. He's still a young man so it's about making sure he gets the opportunity to get those things right."

How they line up

France		Wales
T Ramos	15	L Rees-Zammit
D Penaud	14	J Adams
G Fickou	13	G North
J Danty	12	N Tompkins
E Dumortier	11	R Dyer
R Ntamack	10	D Biggar
A Dupont (c)	9	R Webb
C Baille	1	W Jones
J Marchand	2	K Owens (c)
U Atonio	3	T Francis
T Flament	4	A Beard
R Taofifenua	5	AW Jones
F Cros	6	A Wainwright
C Ollivon	7	J Tipuric
G Alldritt	8	T Faletau

Replacements	Replacements
P Mauvaka	B Roberts
R Wardi	G Thomas
S Falatea	D Lewis
B Chalureau	D Jenkins
S Macalou	T Reffell
M Lucu	T Williams
Y Moefana	O Williams
M Jaminet	L Halfpenny

Kick-off 2.45pm **Referee** N Berry (Aus) **Assistant** A Brace (Ire), C Ridley (Eng) **TMO** J Neville (Ire).

WILL BRAZIL GO THE DISTANCE?

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Borthwick gives misfiring back row shot at redemption

Alex Lowe
Rugby Correspondent



England stooped so low against France that even the standard riposte of a professional sportsman — "You can't question the effort" — was redundant. The players, by their own admission, gave up. They failed in all the areas that required no talent — commitment, heart, aggression, intensity — and most of those that do.

Yet away from the distracting glare created by the selection of Henry Arundell, a diamond of a prospect on the wing, Steve Borthwick handed a reprieve to those who were out-thought and outgunned in the key battleground against France.

England's team to play Ireland in Dublin features only two selection changes, both in the back division, when it was England's inability to match the nous and physicality of France in the contact area that cost them so dearly.

Owen Farrell has returned at fly half ahead of Marcus Smith, despite nursing an ankle injury all week, and Arundell makes his first Test start on the wing. The two other alterations were enforced by injury, with Manu Tuilagi returning at inside centre for Ollie Lawrence and David Ribbans taking over from Ollie Chessum in the second row.

Borthwick has given the England pack an opportunity to redeem themselves but there are players who should be on a final warning. If maximum effort is the minimum requirement, falling below that level twice could be career-ending.

"The players need to understand what it means to compete with the top teams in international rugby. We were found short last week, a long way short. This week the players know they need to be much better," Borthwick said. "We were a long way short in a lot of areas last week. That has been made incredibly clear. We are playing the best team in the world. We want to compete for wins in every Test match. We were a long way short last week. We need to be better this week. The team are determined. I have seen a resolve."

Alex Dombrandt is one player under the spotlight. The Harlequins No 8 has survived the axe for a second straight game. Chessum was in line to start at blind-side flanker against Ireland, with Lewis Ludlam switching to No 8, before he suffered an ankle dislocation in training that has put his World Cup ambitions in doubt. Dombrandt therefore gets a chance to atone for his meek performance against France.

At times he shied away from the physical challenge posed by Grégory Alldritt and François Cros in the France back row. When England next reconvene, for their World Cup training camp, Zach Mercer, the Montpellier No 8 and reigning Top 14 player of the year, will be available to England. Tom Willis will have finished his first season in France, where he is impressing for Bordeaux-Begles. Borthwick will have options.

Jack Willis and Ludlam, newly appointed as vice-captain, were outclassed too as France dominated the breakdown and detonated England's plan to play quick and wide. England did not help themselves either; they were inaccurate in their clear-outs and they failed to adapt to some cute French tactics.

None of that will have escaped the attention of Ireland's streetwise back row trio of Caelan Doris, Peter O'Mahony and Josh van der Flier. "I know Steve and I know the English players and it is something that they're trying to shore up this week," Andy Farrell, the Ireland coach, said. "It's about good decision-making, that's all it is, Peter and Josh, that's what they'll be judged on, making the right decisions, not going chasing everything just for the sake of it."



Dombrandt endured a tough time against France

If England cannot compete in the physical exchanges against Ireland, then Jack van Poortvliet will be in for another tough day at scrum half and the selection of Arundell on the wing as an attacking threat will be largely academic. Borthwick's decision to choose this game for the 20-year-old to make his first Test start was a surprise. Arundell has started only six games for London Irish in the Gallagher Premiership, all of them at full back. He has won six England caps off the bench and in 77 minutes of action he has touched the ball only six times.

Arundell has, though, scored two tries. Seasoned, cynical, seen-it-all before international players have been stunned by his dazzling attacking threat. Those who work with Arundell know him to be a remarkable athlete with a temperament suited to international rugby. Nevertheless, it is dangerous to expect him to be England's saviour this weekend. All the indications are that England will try to play a tight, territorial game and his job will be to chase kicks in the hope of delivering a moment of magic that rocks Ireland.

Tuilagi was dropped at the start of the Six Nations but returns in a familiar combination with Farrell and Henry Slade. The trio were instrumental in England's win against Ireland in 2019, which was one of their best performances under Eddie Jones, but they have not played together since the World Cup quarter-final against Australia later that year.

Tuilagi has played six Tests against Ireland and won them all — but England will need more than lucky charms in Dublin this weekend. Ireland have the opportunity to establish themselves as one of the great Six Nations teams, given the dominance of their victories in the championship thus far, by winning the grand slam on St Patrick's weekend.

Andy Farrell's side prevailed against Scotland last week despite losing five players to injury, including both hookers. Garry Ringrose, Iain Henderson and Ronan Kelleher are out of Saturday's spectacle but Dan Sheehan and Doris have been passed fit to play.

"It's a strong team," Andy Farrell said. "[Winning a grand slam in Dublin on St Patrick's weekend] is something that we've talked about from day one. It's not been done here. We've earned the right to have a go at that. Now we're here, we've got to deliver.

"It is about being calm enough to be yourself, being controlled enough to be accurate when it matters. That is the temperament we're all chasing. Desperation is an illness. You want to stay away from that. You can't be accurate if you're desperate."

Farrell was talking about Ireland and the need to keep their emotions in check — but his words would apply with equal relevance to England. It is shaping up to be, as one taxi driver put it (minus the expletives), "a wild weekend".

How they line up

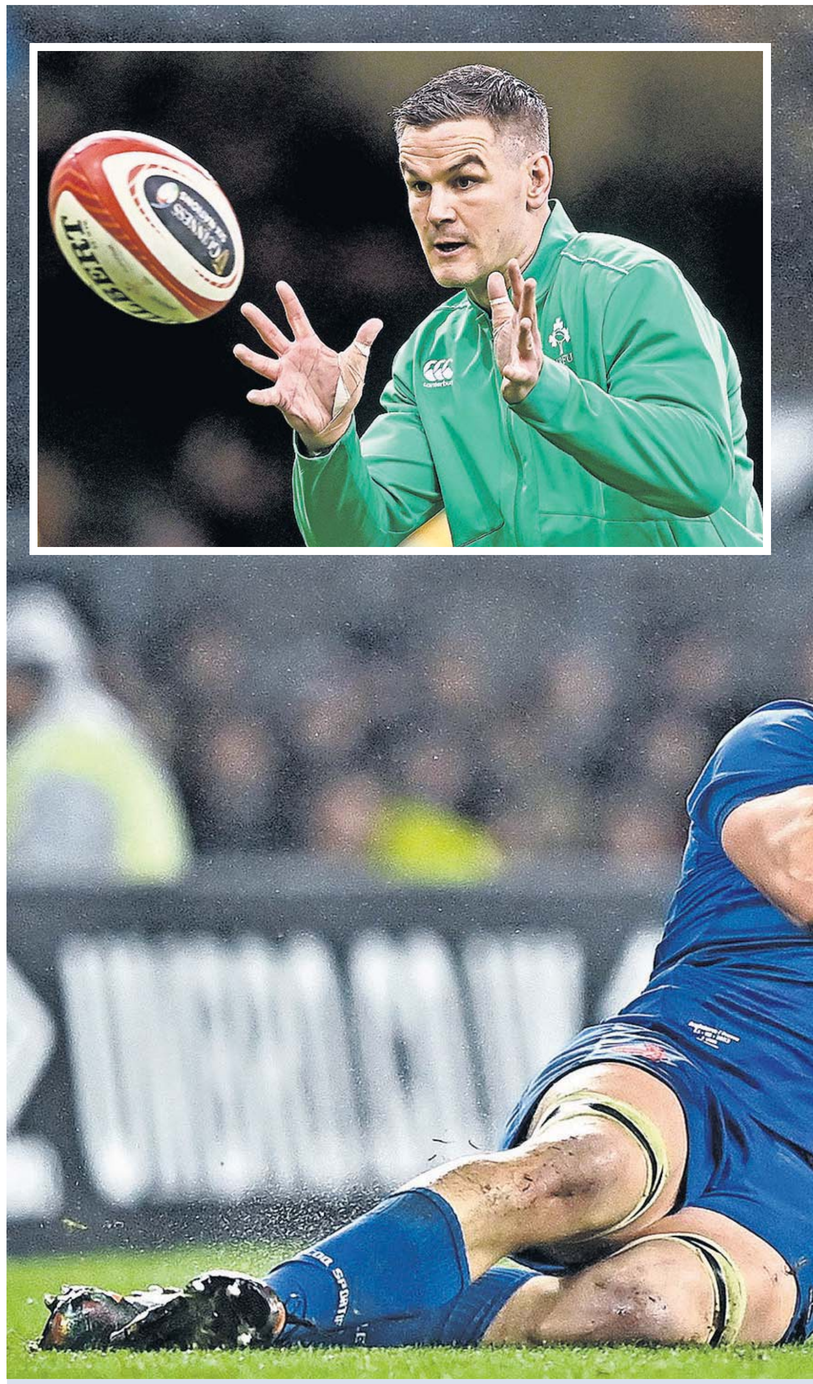
Ireland		England
H Keenan	15	F Steward
M Hansen	14	A Watson
R Henshaw	13	H Slade
B Aki	12	M Tuilagi
J Lowe	11	H Arundell
J Sexton (c)	10	O Farrell (c)
J Gibson-Park	9	J van Poortvliet
A Porter	1	E Genge
D Sheehan	2	J George
T Furlong	3	K Sinckler
R Baird	4	M Itoje
J Ryan	5	D Ribbans
P O'Mahony	6	L Ludlam
J Van der Flier	7	J Willis
C Doris	8	A Dombrandt

Replacements	Replacements
R Herring	J Walker
C Healy	M Vunipola
T O'Toole	D Cole
K Treadwell	N Isiekwe
J Conan	B Curry
C Murray	A Mitchell
R Byrne	M Smith
J O'Brien	J Marchant

Kick-off 5pm **Referee** J Peyper (SA) **Assistant** B O'Keeffe (NZ), P Brousset (Fr) **TMO** M Jonker (SA)

How they stand

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts diff	B	T	Pts
Ireland	4	4	0	0	122	56	66	3	16	**19**
France	4	3	0	1	133	87	46	3	16	**15**
Scotland	4	2	0	2	92	82	10	2	13	**10**
England	4	2	0	2	84	106	-22	2	12	**10**
Wales	4	1	0	3	56	106	-50	1	7	**5**
Italy	4	0	0	4	75	123	-48	1	8	**1**



Arundell won't be fazed by playing on wing in Dublin

London Irish full back, who will start in an unfamiliar role, relishes a hostile environment, he tells **Will Kelleher**

A Six Nations game against grand slam-chasing Ireland in Dublin — what a place to make your first ever start in professional rugby on the wing, not that it will faze Henry Arundell. The 20-year-old London Irish star has the self-assurance to match his game-breaking ability. When he spoke to The Times last month, he was not content with only playing at Twickenham for the first time during this Six Nations. He had been chatting to his brother, Jack, about the best places to play and settled on the toughest of environments.

"The two games that would be unbelievable to play in would be Wales away and Ireland in Dublin on St Patrick's," he said last month. "I prefer the idea of playing away with

Farrell: Home grand slam

CONTINUED FROM BACK

make sure he gets the ball, to use his strengths. I'm excited by the talent he has. It's the right time for him to start.

"Our intention is, as we continue to develop our game — our outside backs have got some incredible strengths — that they have some quality ball to play with."

Chessum will have ankle surgery on Monday and Borthwick said he will be missed dearly. "The determination he has to be back on the field and in an England shirt is quite immense," the head coach said. "He will have the opportunity to be fit and back on the field in readiness for the World Cup."

An Ireland victory would seal only their third Six Nations grand slam and fourth overall: they swept the board in 1948, 2009 and 2018.

Caelan Doris, the No 8, and Dan Sheehan, the hooker, who were both injured against Scotland, have overcome hip and shoulder issues respectively to



Arundell was nominated for Breakthrough Player of the Year alongside Hansen — his opposite number

a hostile crowd.” There are hardly any tougher places to pick for your first Test start. On St Patrick’s weekend, Ireland are desperate to complete the grand slam in their capital city for the first time. Other young players might pick an easier introduction, but Arundell fancies it. While in the 21 matches he has played in his senior professional career — 12 in the Gallagher Premiership, three in the Challenge Cup and six England Tests — Arundell has never started on the wing, he has appeared there for his country as a substitute.

In those Test matches he has touched the ball only six times, in 77 minutes of action, and has scored twice. His first try was in Perth, with his first touch in international rugby. Arundell bashed through the shocked Australia defence, jinked past James O’Connor and touched down as England rallied.

Then in this Six Nations, against Italy, he leapt in down the left when fizzed a pass by Alex Mitchell. Give Arundell the ball and things happen. London Irish fans know that, having seen him score tries from the end-of-the-earth — particularly the one against Toulon in Europe last year, where his finish was so ridiculous it was the talk of the World Rugby awards in Monaco.

Arundell was nominated for the Breakthrough Player of the Year Award, alongside his opposite number on Saturday, Mack Hansen. Ange Capuozzo won it, but Arundell had won over legends of the game. As he schmoozed in his dinner jacket in Monte Carlo with Dan Carter, Bryan Habana and Jamie Roberts, he was a little starstruck.

“When it was Habana and Carter it was, ‘What am I doing here?’ ” he said. “It was weird, as initially I had imposter syndrome, but it was crazy they knew a lot about me, asked how Irish was and chatted about parts of my game. You know things have gone viral, but why does Dan Carter care about me?”

Having played the majority of his club rugby at full back, Arundell should be prepared for the raining bombs that will come from Johnny Sexton’s boot. That will be his ultimate test — standing under a high hoof from one of the greats of the game, with 52,000 roaring at him and green shirts swarming.

If he copes, he could carve through on the counterattack. Make no mistake, he will be targeted — but there is something in Arundell that will probably enjoy that.

was our goal – now it’s time to deliver

make the starting team. Garry Ringrose is out with concussion so Robbie Henshaw replaces him at centre, Jamison-Gibson Park starts at scrum half instead of Conor Murray and the lock Ryan Baird comes in for Iain Henderson, who broke his forearm at Murrayfield last weekend. Rob Herring, Kieran Treadwell and Jimmy O’Brien come on to the bench in place of Ronan Kelleher, Baird and Henshaw.

Andy Farrell, the Ireland head coach, won a grand slam as the team’s defence coach in 2018, but is on the verge of winning one in his own right. Ireland have never completed the clean sweep in Dublin — something that the players set as a target in their pre-tournament camp in Portugal.

“You can feel the buzz,” Farrell said. “That’s what we’ve done: we’ve put ourselves in a position to have a crack at this and it’s something that we’ve been up front about from the beginning, which is pretty pleasing. Now we’re here, we’ve got to deliver.”

England sacked Farrell as an assistant coach in 2015 after the World Cup, though Eddie Jones tried to bring him back three years later. Farrell said he has no desire to leave Ireland now, having settled in the country.

“Why would we?” he said when asked if he would one day seek another job. “We love it here. When you make a decision, you commit. We’re loving life and the rugby’s good as well. The joined-up approach with coaches, unions and the provinces is unbelievably powerful.”

Genge’s fighting talk plays into Ireland’s hands

Stuart Barnes



Ireland v England
Aviva Stadium
Tomorrow, 5pm
TV: ITV1, from 4.30pm
Radio: BBC 5 Live

Are England punch-drunk after failing to prevent France from passing the previously inconceivable 50-point mark at Twickenham? According to Ellis Genge — the captain for 50 minutes on Saturday until Owen Farrell emerged, only to subside with the other 14 blokes on the field — it took a Farrell team-talk on Monday morning to get the English bottom lips off the floor.

There’s nothing wrong with some inspiring vocabulary, but England are going to need more than a thesaurus to convince them that victory is anything but a pipe dream in Dublin on Saturday. The Bristol Bears loosehead prop says that the game from an England perspective is “about proving a point that we have got some fight in us, because that was questioned at the weekend”.

There has been much talk over the ineptitude of the performance, but has anyone really wondered whether the team lacked fight? It reads very much as if this is a case of internal criticism; the sort of stuff that stays locked deep within the bowels of the changing room. We are in the old-fashioned realm where players try to prove something to themselves. The reaction to the 80 minutes of misery at Twickenham is a matter for the men involved and mirrors.

Genge painted England as the underdogs this weekend — there isn’t really any other option — and said all the odds were against them (you’ll find no dissenting voices from the bookmakers), but he added: “I’m really confident that we’ll come out swinging.”

And that is exactly what Ireland will be praying for. The boxing analogy is a worrying one for supporters of England. The fighter who “comes out swinging” is the scrapper likely to get picked off by the cleverer boxer. Ireland will be delighted if England take the field with such a mindset.

Andy Farrell’s team had their own mini moment of crisis in Edinburgh on Sunday. They lost one from each row of forwards to injury: a hooker, a lock and a No 8. To add to the potential crisis, Scotland were causing chaos with their fabulously functioning midfield. Ireland are the world’s No 1 team, but they had no more fortune stifling Huw Jones and his coruscating running lines than England, Wales and France before them.

Scotland played the first half at pace and threw everything in their arsenal at Ireland. Somehow the battered and bruised visitors were 8-7 ahead as they pondered that anarchic first 40 minutes. According to Farrell, the head coach, the players were sitting in the changing room at the interval laughing at the craziness of it all. Not only are Ireland producing a different style of rugby to anything England have ever imagined, they are approaching the mind games of international sport with a fresh perspective.

The frank team talk, the head-banging on the walls, the mea culpa — they were around in my day and long before that. Rugby is a physical game. It is easier to fight than it is to think. What Ireland did was not only battle their way to a convincing win against Scotland, they calmly thought their way through all they needed to do. Ireland adapted to the loss of both hookers by unveiling Josh van der Flier as a solid throwing-in option to the front of the line. He practised and prepared himself for the almost unthinkable possibility of them losing both their hookers. Of course he did.

And Cian Healy was registered before kick-off as the nominated third hooker. This meant that the lineout was limited, but with a trio of props in the front row, à la France of old, they were able to intensify the scrums rather than let them go uncontested. They destroyed the Scotland pack as it tired and lost its first-choice technicians in the final quarter.

There will be no anti-English ranting in the home changing room on Saturday, just a clarity in knowing how to handle the injuries that afflicted them during the Scotland game. When Wales won the title in 2021 Ireland were playing and losing games they could have won. After initial narrow defeats by Wales and France (their latest home loss), Ireland won their next three games, including a 32-18 thrashing of England. Focused on what the team were intent on doing and not the dangerously deceptive scoreline obsession, Farrell’s men were on the move.

Contrast that with 2023 England and Genge’s comments: “It [the game] literally couldn’t have got any worse because it was a record defeat, wasn’t it?” It was definitely that, but was it actually England’s worst performance of the championship? The standard of the Wales-England game was dreadful, but, because England won, it was explained away as a positive. Two wins from three games, the pundits nodded approvingly.

Ireland’s take in England’s position would have been negative: not a single impressive performance from four attempts. Fans judging their teams on results is one thing, the actual players is quite another.

England would be better thinking about their game than making promises to come out swinging and being exposed to Irish counterblows. It’ll take more than one punch to deprive Ireland of their richly deserved grand slam.



Genge said that his side will try to prove a point in Dublin

Sport

'We are lacking depth'

Southgate says foreign influx to top flight hurting England

Page 61



JAMES WILLIAMSON/AMA/GETTY IMAGES



Martinelli miss costs Arsenal

Brazilian youngster has decisive penalty saved as Mikel Arteta's side are knocked out of Europa League round of 16 in 5-3 shoot-out defeat by Sporting Lisbon. Page 63

England gamble on Arundell

Chessum could miss World Cup after dislocating his ankle in training

Will Kelleher
Deputy Rugby Correspondent

Steve Borthwick has backed Henry Arundell to cope with the pressure of starting a game on the wing for the first time in his career, against the best team in the world, tomorrow.

The 20-year-old will make his full England debut against an Ireland side trying to seal the Six Nations grand slam in Dublin.

The England head coach's big selection call came as he revealed that Ollie Chessum, the Leicester Tigers lock, had dislocated his ankle in training on Tuesday and is now a doubt for the World Cup. The 22-year-old faces up to six months out.

Borthwick has replaced Chessum with the Northampton Saints lock David Ribbans, but selected the same back row that was dominated by France in last week's 53-10 defeat: Jack Willis, Lewis Ludlam and Alex Dombrandt. Borthwick has brought Owen Farrell, the captain, back in at fly half, replacing Marcus Smith and pairing Farrell with the centres Manu Tuilagi and Henry Slade. Farrell has been battling an ankle injury but is fit to start.

Arundell was the surprise pick, replacing Max Malins on the wing, but Borthwick believes that he will relish playing the Irish.

"He is a young man but my experience of him is that he's really calm and composed," Borthwick said. "For a man of his age that is rare to see. I've made it clear that I will pick players on the strengths that they bring.

"Henry has been injured for a big chunk of the season but what I've seen in the past month or two is an incredible player. He's been on the bench for a number of games and now I want to see that from the start. The intention is to

Continued on page 66

Qataris to up United offer

Matt Lawton Chief Sports Correspondent

The Qataris bidding to buy Manchester United will now table a second, improved offer for the Premier League club after positive talks with officials at Old Trafford yesterday.

Representatives acting for Sheikh Jassim Bin Hamad al-Thani held detailed financial discussions at the stadium before being given a tour of the Carrington training ground, where they had lunch.

Close to ten hours of cordial talks finally ended at about 7.20pm, with the Qataris now expected to increase the initial offer made last month. The Glazer family want in the region of £6 billion.

United's New York bankers have informed potential buyers that they want a second bid within ten to 14 days, although bidders remain unsure as to

Continued on page 62

'Aussies in for a good hiding'

Elizabeth Ammon

Ollie Robinson has warned that England could give Australia a "good hiding" in the Ashes this summer.

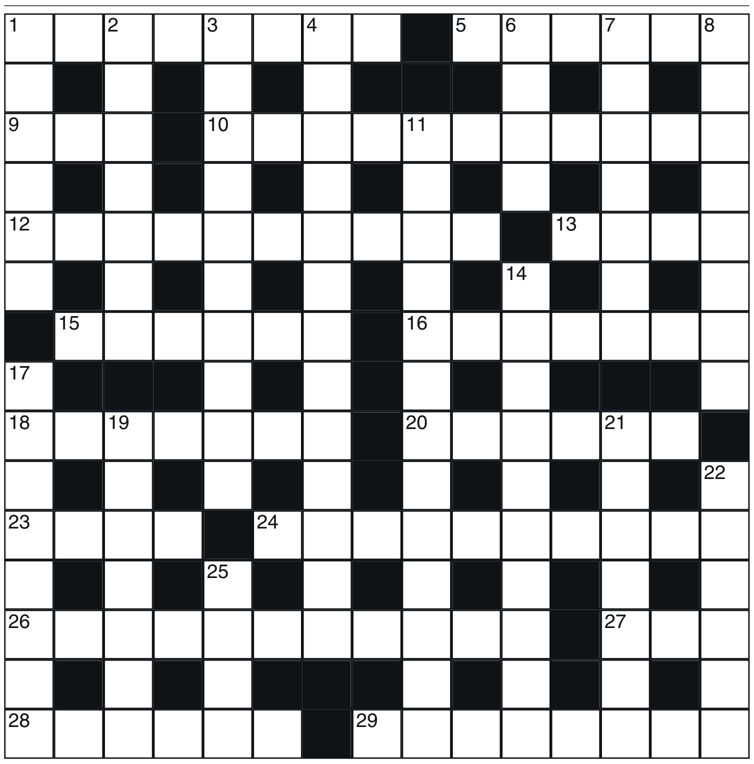
Since a 4-0 thrashing in the 2021/22 Ashes in Australia, when Robinson, the 29-year-old England and Sussex bowler, struggled with his form and fitness, England have been transformed by Brendon McCullum, the red-ball head coach, and Ben Stokes, the Test captain, winning ten of their 12 Tests in an aggressive style.

And Robinson believes that England have progressed sufficiently that they should be considered favourites for the Ashes, which start on June 16 at Edgbaston.

"With the team and squad we have at the moment it's such an exciting time to play Australia at home," Robinson told

Continued on page 64

Times Crossword 28,553



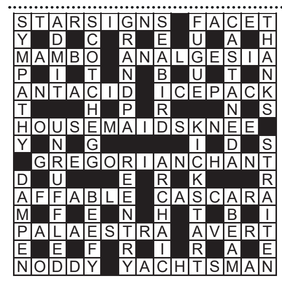
ACROSS

1 It'd be out of place in crab menu (5,3)
5 Ingredient in plaster put over spot in face (6)
9 Settle amount in empty beer glass? (3)
10 Bebop's insiders interrupting one of Stones, who are troublemakers (4,3,4)
12 For an audience, musical collection bore a small organ (10)
13 Oh, endless joy to behold with desire (4)
15 Mutilate man's title from edition being recalled (6)
16 Incisor's coating of enamel seen on outside of head (7)
18 Innumerable other ranks including private following uniform (7)
20 Time lost to abacus at last in turning beads (6)
23 Reflection of petrifying monster would show no such spirit (4)
24 Oil rig labourer to supplant sailor in rabble (10)
26 Light support of container in case carried by Richard (11)
27 A child — count some 23? (3)
28 No tension in parishioners clutching cross (6)
29 Maybe use too few items plucked from cushion or bolster (8)

DOWN

1 Particular church rings Stepney's boundaries (6)
2 Seen in context, remedy is immoderate (7)
3 Mum more properly binds leg for one in the long run (10)
4 Low-key coronation may be so rude (13)
6 Perhaps Klein bottle volume with positive sign? (4)
7 Temporary odds, absorbing for golfers? (7)
8 Protective one's maintaining alternative line (8)
11 Strange sins or original one (13)
14 More than one older lamb chop lasagne's crust's not kept well (10)
17 Of operations, precise as military ones (8)
19 Fire survivor's tool ultimately seen in photos (7)
21 Maximally delay start of demonstration to shout from here? (7)
22 Not quite saying what'll reduce cholesterol (6)
25 Digs away from hills? (4)

Yesterday's solution 28,552



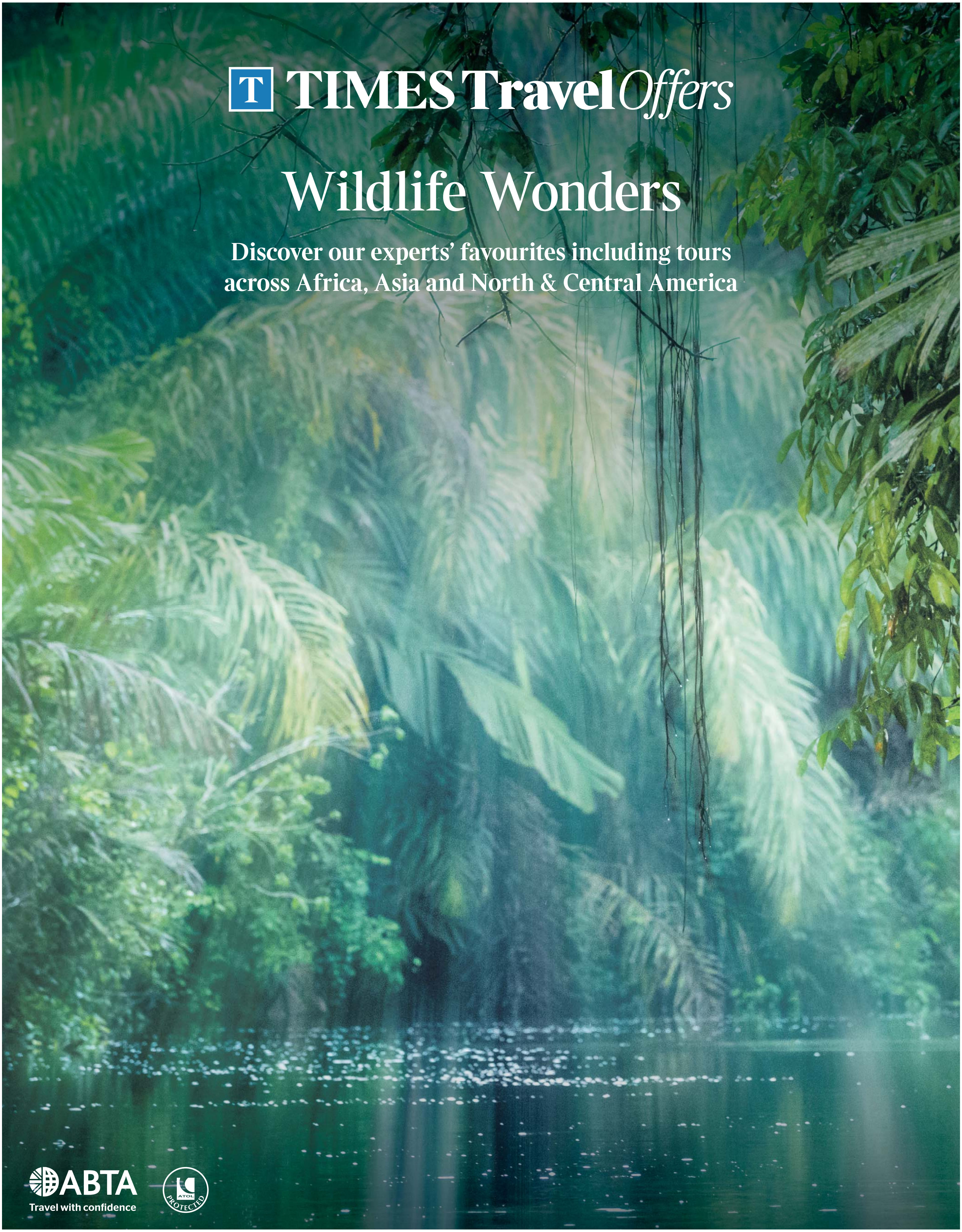
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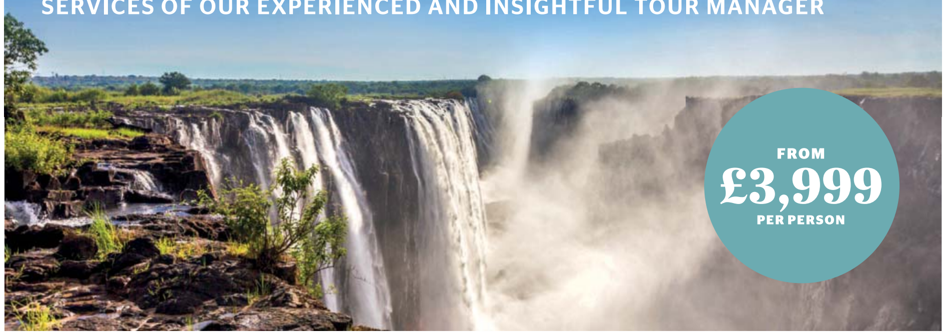
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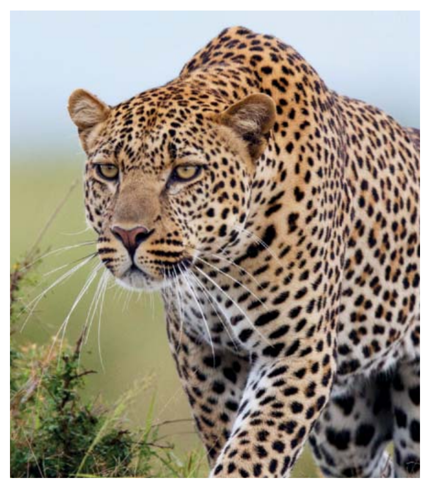
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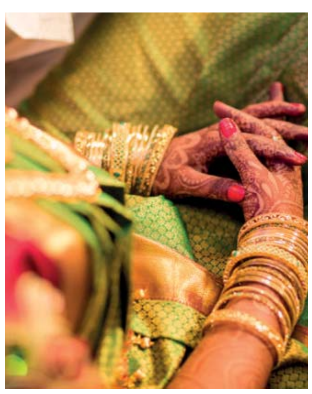












15 DAYS
DEPARTURES SEPTEMBER TO NOVEMBER 2023
AND JANUARY TO NOVEMBER 2024

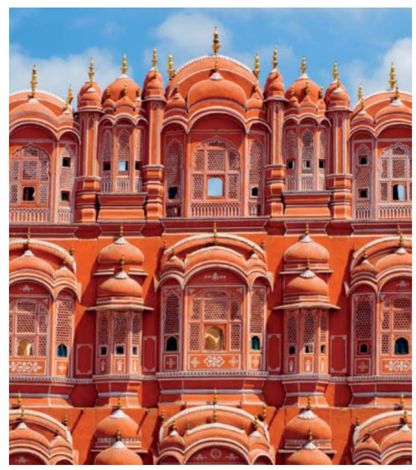
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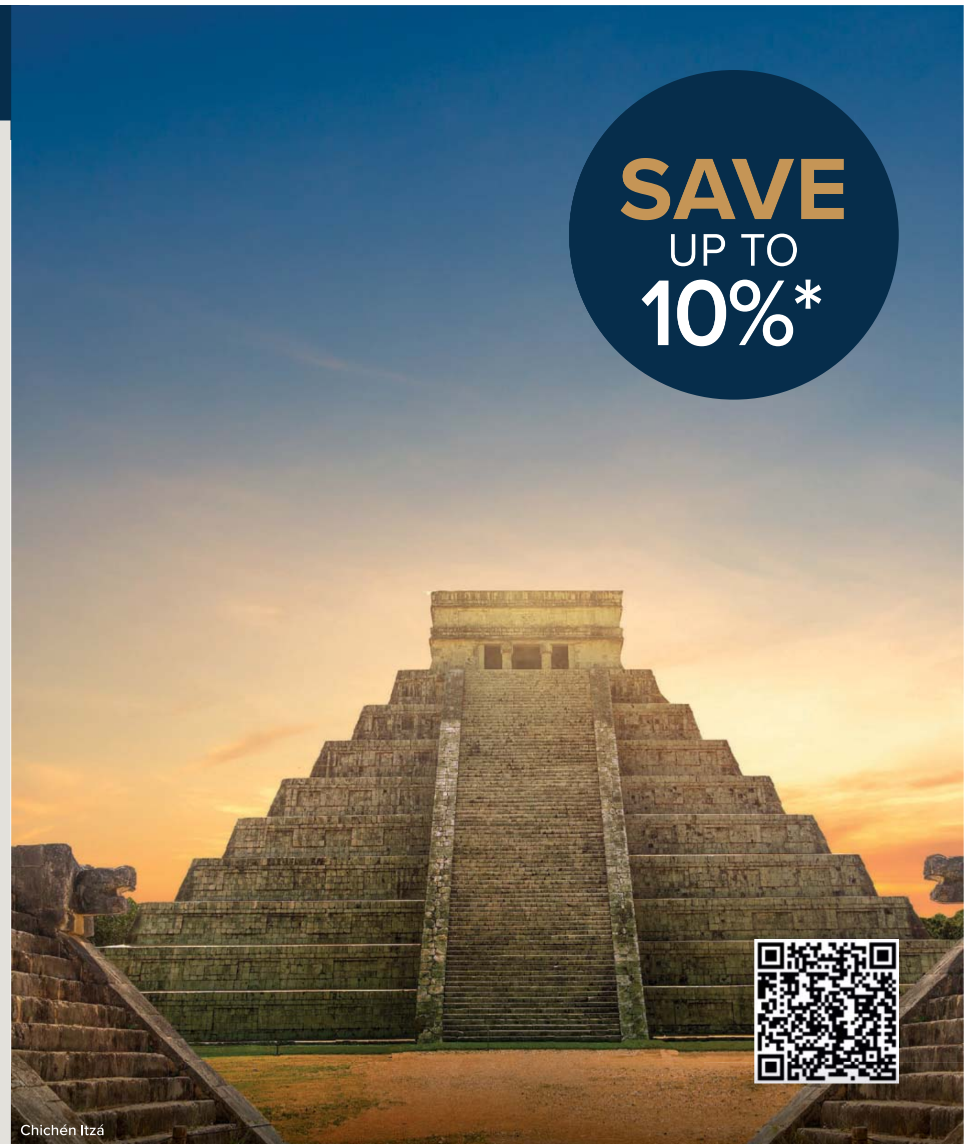
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THE TIMES
FRIDAY MARCH 17 2023

Cheltenham Festival



EVERY RACE EVERY RUNNER EVERY SILK

And now for the big one

Rachael Blackmore triumphed on Envoi Allen yesterday and today tries to win the Gold Cup for a second time on A Plus Tard

TIMES PHOTOGRAPHER MARC ASPLAND

A day when jockeys come



BROUGH SCOTT



You don't win championship races unless you hit them at your absolute peak. That applies to both horse and rider. For some it means returning to an already established excellence, to others a climb to the very highest level. Chief among the latter in this year's Cheltenham Gold Cup are Noble Yeats and his rider, Sean Bowen.

Noble Yeats, an eight-year-old, has already galloped his place into history by winning last year's Grand National under a swansong ride from his owner's son, Sam Waley-Cohen. But no Grand National winner has ever gone on to land their first Gold Cup after success at Aintree and it will need almost two stone of improvement to score today.

L'Escargot, in the 1970s, won the big race at Aintree after dual Gold Cup wins, while the great Golden Miller took jump racing's blue riband multiple times before and after success at Aintree.

Sean Bowen, 25, was a teenage phenomenon as a juvenile point-to-pointing star in his native Wales before becoming the youngest-ever champion conditional jockey in 2015.

However, he has yet to ride a Cheltenham Festival winner, and his career has been in danger of plateauing in recent seasons, the perched little figure from the principality being more pea on a drum than Pembrokeshire dynamo. The hope for him, as for his Irish-trained partner, is that there is plenty of evidence that this is the time when they can pitch at the very top.

In the eight years since the precocious Bowen dazzled with an amazing last-to-first victory in the end-of-term Bet365 Gold Cup at Sandown Park, he has looked a really good jockey in the making without actually making it.

The talent is very evident up there behind the mane, but it was not sharpened by the hunger for winners that a champion wants.

"The good thing is that the person who realises this is Sean Bowen," says Mick Fitzgerald, Bowen's original jockey coach and an analyst with the formidable credentials of having won both the Grand National and the Cheltenham Gold Cup. "He's so talented that it was really coming a bit easy for him, but now he has got himself a whole lot fitter, he is really focused, and he is a future champion for certain."

The results speak for themselves. With 109 winners on the board, he lies second in the current championship behind the runaway leader Brian Hughes, and eight ahead of Harry Cobden, who has climbed above him from a big-race perspective with his Festival and King George VI Chase winners despite being a year his junior and a conditional champion two seasons after Bowen.

Teaming up with Noble Yeats on Waley-Cohen's retirement has given Bowen a ladder and how splendidly he has taken it. Their first association was something of a cakewalk at Wexford, but their finishing burst next time over the less intimidating of the Aintree fences was impressive enough to put the Cheltenham Gold Cup into consideration. Although only third to today's rivals Ahoy Senor and Sounds Russian at this track in January, he was giving them weight and closing them down in the finish at a rate that made you think he would be a threat to today's favourites if the gallop and conditions turn the final stages into a slogging match. Noble Yeats will also now be fitted with the focus-sharpening cheekpieces that he wore last March, but it still remains easier to see Bowen as chief among his peers, as it does last year's Grand National hero.

A Plus Tard, Galopin Des Champs and Bravemansgame have all already delivered at grade one level, as indeed have their respective pilots, Rachael Blackmore, Paul Townend and Cobden. Can they peak again this afternoon?

On the face of it, A Plus Tard looks the least likely. He hasn't been seen for 119 days and that was when pulling up after a feeble display at Haydock.

To be running him on that sort of preparation looks to be rather a stupid thing to do, until you remember that Henry de Bromhead is anything but a stupid trainer. If he says he has the horse back to the star who won last year's Gold Cup, who are we to doubt him or the ever-admirable Blackmore, whose intuitive skills, no-truck determination and tactical nous were so evident in Honeysuckle's fairytale farewell at Cheltenham on Tuesday. Galopin Des Champs is unlikely to lack anything from the saddle. Townend has been on board each of the seven-year-old's five wins over fences as well as the final-fence capsize at last year's Festival. That losing of legs on landing could hardly be put down to rider error, and with two Cheltenham Gold Cups aboard Al Boum Photo on his scabbard, and Galopin Des Champs having a simple, relentless, head-of-affairs style of running, Townend will not be fazed.

And the wonderfully balanced and enviably tempered Cobden will take the big occasion in his stride, too. His winning ride on Bravemansgame in the King George VI Chase at Kempton Park was a thing of beauty, only exceeded by his front-running masterclass on Stage Star yesterday. The question is whether a horse of his speed and style will have what it takes when the final fence has been jumped and Cheltenham's last demanding incline still has to be conquered. Galopin Des Champs looks more certain to stay and his rolling gallop might just have broken this field before they even turn for home.

But Cheltenham Gold Cups rarely allow easy leaders and an in-form Ahoy Senor is an awesome jumper to have alongside you. What is for certain is that whoever takes it this year will truly deserve their crown.



Waley-Cohen, top, enjoys a swansong triumph in last year's Grand National on Noble Yeats — he will be ridden in the Gold Cup by Bowen, above, who has yet to have a winner at the Cheltenham Festival

Rob Wright's top tips
How to bet £20 at Cheltenham

Gala Marceau (1.30)
£4 win
9-2 with Coral, Ladbrokes and William Hill

Pembroke (2.10)
£6 win
8-1 with William Hill

Imagine (5.30)
£10 win
11-2 with William Hill

Total stake - £20

of age

TIMES PHOTOGRAPHER MARC ASPLAND





Blackmore, above, won last year's Cheltenham Gold Cup on A Plus Tard and will ride the horse, who pulled up in his only run since, again today, while Galopin Des Champs, right, is the hot favourite, though he fell at the final fence at the Festival 12 months ago

DAY THREE AT A GLANCE

YESTERDAY'S WINNERS

1.30 Turners Novices' Chase (grade one) Stage Star 15-2
2.10 Pertemps Network Final Handicap Hurdle Good Time Jonny 9-1
2.50 Ryanair Chase (grade one) Envoi Allen 13-2
3.30 Paddy Power Stayers' Hurdle (grade one) Sire Du Berlais 33-1
4.10 Magners Plate Handicap Chase Seddon 20-1
4.50 Jack de Bromhead Mares' Novices' Hurdle (grade two) You Wear It Well 16-1
5.30 Fulke Walwyn Kim Muir Challenge Cup Amateur Jockeys' Handicap Chase Angels Dawn 10-1

TOP TRAINERS

Willie Mullins........................**4** winners
Henry de Bromhead, Gordon Elliott..**3**
Barry Connell, Lucinda Russell, Nicky Henderson, Patrick Neville, Dan Skelton, John McConnell, Paul Nicholls, Tony Martin, John Kiely, Jamie Snowden, Sam Curling.........**1**

TOP JOCKEYS

Paul Townend....................**3** winners
Rachael Blackmore, Michael O'Sullivan..**2**
Derek Fox, Nico de Boinville, Pat King, Patrick Mullins, Ben Harvey, Harry Cobden, Keith Donoghue, Sam Twiston-Davies, Mark Walsh, Liam McKenna, Harry Skelton, Darragh O'Keeffe, John Gleeson, Gavin Sheehan.......................................**1**

6 GREAT BRITAIN V IRELAND 15

Galopin Des Champs can bring Mullins more glory



ROB WRIGHT
RACING EDITOR

It took Willie Mullins over 30 years to saddle his first Cheltenham Gold Cup winner but he can claim a third success in five years in the premier jumps race through **Galopin Des Champs** in the Boodles-sponsored highlight (3.30).

Galopin Des Champs won a handicap hurdle on this card two years ago but followed that with a grade-one success over the smaller obstacles at Punchestown and has not looked back since his switch to fences last season.

He suffered his only defeat in six chase starts in the Turners Novices' Chase at last year's Festival but would have beaten the classy Bob Olinger with any amount in hand had he not fallen at the last.

Galopin Des Champs has won three times at the highest level since then and relished a first try at three miles when beating Stattler by eight lengths in the Irish Gold Cup at Leopardstown last month. The strength of his finish there went a long way to allaying any fears that this still stiffer test of stamina would be a problem and he is the one to beat.

Henry de Bromhead has saddled the one-two in this race for the past two years, with A Plus Tard and Minella Indo sharing a victory apiece. Both are back again, with A Plus Tard feared the most. He was an easy winner 12 months ago and, while he has not been seen since pulled up in the Betfair Chase at Haydock Park in November, he has a good record after a break.

De Bromhead is enjoying a good week and said of A Plus Tard: "You would love to have had another run under his belt, but we're well able to get him ready and all I can tell you is he's mighty now."

Stattler could get closer to Galopin Des Champs than he did at Leopardstown over this longer trip but he has eight lengths to find. Last year's Grand National winner Noble Yeats is still improving and, fitted with cheekpieces for the first time since his Aintree success, he could easily make his presence felt.

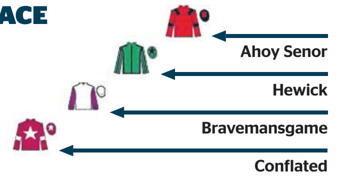
The Paul Nicholls-trained Bravemansgame looks best of the home team having landed the King George VI Chase by 14 lengths at Kempton Park on Boxing Day. Nicholls has a particularly good record in the top chases and has won the Gold Cup four times. Bravemansgame ran well on his only previous visit to the Festival, when third in the Ballymore Novices' Hurdle two years ago, and has been beaten just once over fences. He, too, merits respect in a strong renewal.

Mullins saddled five winners on this day last year and again looks set to enjoy plenty of success. He holds a ridiculously strong hand — even by his standards — in the JCB Triumph Hurdle (1.30), saddling seven of the 15 runners including the first four in the betting. **Gala Marceau** is taken to come out on top. Winner of both starts over hurdles when trained in France, Gala Marceau was beaten on her debut for Mullins by stablemate Lossiemouth but turned the tables on that rival in grade-one company at Leopardstown last month.

ROB WRIGHT'S RACE OF THE DAY

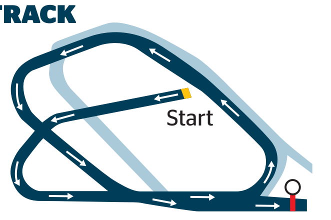
GOLD CUP 3.30PM, ITV THE RUNNERS ANALYSED

PACE



Ahoy Senor is most likely to set the early fractions but there are several others who will not want to be too far off the pace, including the strong-staying Hewick. King George winner Bravemansgame likes to track the pace and this seems sure to provide a thorough test of stamina.

TRACK



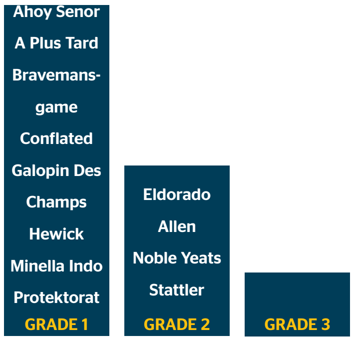
The action switched to the New Course at Cheltenham yesterday and the same track hosts the final day of the meeting. The New Course runs parallel to the Old Course for a long way but offers a stiffer test of stamina, with a longer home straight.

STAT OF THE DAY

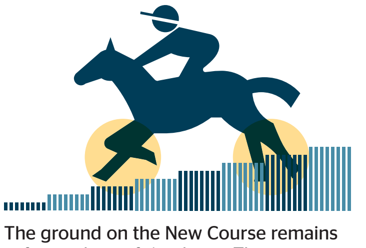
Irish trainers have saddled the winner in seven of the past nine renewals. They could again dominate with the six of the first eight in the betting, including the favourite, Galopin Des Champs, coming from the Emerald Isle. They had landed the prize just twice in the previous 16 years.



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GOING soft, good to soft places



The ground on the New Course remains soft, good to soft in places. There was steady drizzle at the track yesterday and, with showers again forecast, conditions are unlikely to dry out.

ROB'S FINAL WORD



Willie Mullins, *right*, suffered a rare blank at the Festival yesterday but can roar back in style by saddling the improving **Galopin Des Champs** to land this prize. He relished a step up in trip to win the Irish Gold Cup and can see off last year's winner A Plus Tard.

Lossiemouth is favourite today having been shuffled back by a tiring runner last time and also forced to go wide around the home turn. While she did not get the rub of the green there, Gala Marceau wasted energy by pulling hard for the first half-mile of the race and deserves credit for the strength of her finish.

Gala Marceau is fitted with a hood for the first time here, which should help her to relax through the early stages, and she can confirm form with her stablemate.

The McCoy Contractors County Handicap Hurdle (2.10) is typically competitive but **Pembroke** looks to have solid claims. He won two novice hurdles in good style, including a 16-length success at Ludlow which has proved strong form.

He just failed to stay over an extra half-mile when second in grade-two company at this track but travelled powerfully for a long way. A strongly run race back at this trip should be ideal.

Corbetts Cross is improving and can take the Albert Bartlett Novices' Hurdle (2.50) for Emmet Mullins. Formerly trained by Eugene O'Sullivan, Corbetts Cross made a winning start for Mullins when landing a grade two race at Naas despite the drop to two miles looking to be against him. Back to his best trip, he can prove too good for Three Card Brag, who will appreciate this stiffer test.

Vaucelet looks a worthy favourite in the St James's Place Festival Challenge Cup Hunters' Chase (4.10). He looked to be just getting on top of Billaway — who won this race last year — when making a jolting mistake at the final fence at Punchestown last April.

Mullins has landed the first two renewals of the Mrs Paddy Power Mares' Chase (4.50) and again has the favourite in Allegorie De Vassy. However, her tendency to jump to her right is not ideal on this left-handed track and **Impervious** makes more appeal. The latter beat Dinoblue, who ran well here on Wednesday, in grade-two company at Cork in December and followed that with a defeat of the useful Journey With Me at Punchestown. She can continue her winning roll here.

Gordon Elliott can saddle a third winner of the Martin Pipe Conditional Jockeys' Handicap Hurdle (5.30) through **Imagine**. He has kept classy company over two miles in novice company in Ireland this year but is bred for stamina and is likely to take a big stride forward now that he steps up in trip.

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THE RACES

Cheltenham
Rob Wright

1.30 Gala Marceau
2.10 Pembroke (nb)
2.50 Corbetts Cross
3.30 Galopin Des Champs
4.10 Vaucelet
4.50 Impervious
5.30 Imagine (nap)

Going: soft, good to soft in places
Racing TV

1.30 JCB Triumph Hurdle — ITV
(4-Y-O: £78,333: 2m 1f) (15 runners)

1 343 **ACTIVE DUTY** 24 (BF) **113**
B Pauling (Mr T P Radford) 11-2 **T Cannon**
Beaten favourite at Market Rasen; out of his depth

2 6266 **ALMUHIT** 34 **125**
D Hogan (Ire) (Mr Justin Carthy) 11-2 **D Meyler**
Form slump since Punchestown second; mulish last time

3 24 **ASCENDING** 41 **129**
H De Bromhead (Ire) (C Jones) 11-2 **Rachael Blackmore**
Remote fourth behind Gala Marceau at Leopardstown

4 2-11 **BLOOD DESTINY** 62 (D) **143**
W P Mullins (Ire) (Roaringwater Synd) 11-2 **Mr P W Mullins**
Eye-catching successes at Cork and Fairyhouse

5 15 **GUST OF WIND** 41 **126**
W P Mullins (Ire) (Hollywood Synd) 11-2 **S O'Keeffe**
Not competitive behind Gala Marceau at Leopardstown

6 2 **HYPOTENUS** 20 (H,T) **115**
J McConnell (Ire) (Mr D Kierans) 11-2 **S Bowen**
Beaten three lengths by Zenta in Fairyhouse grade three

7 606 **JACOVEC CAVERN** 27 (H) **119**
P Hennessy (Ire) (The Turner Family) 11-2 **S W Flanagan**
Has toiled in maidens; hood made little impact last time

8 240U11 **JIPCOT** 26 (D) **105**
B Pauling (The Megsons) 11-2 **Luca Morgan**
Making UK debut after two wins at Pau, last time a listed

9 3-16 **JUPITER DU GITE** 48 (H) **105**
G L Moore (Alan Jamieson Site Services) 11-2 **N F Houlihan**
Looked good at Newbury; then too keen in grade two here

10 2 **RIGHTSOTOM** 129 **105**
T Mullins (Ire) (Mrs Rita Byrne) 11-2 **Jack Foley**
Not seen out since Fairyhouse second in November

11 4-6 **CINSA** 41 **110**
W P Mullins (Ire) (Sullivan Bloodstock Ltd) 10-9 **B Hayes**
Soon left trailing behind Gala Marceau at Leopardstown

12 1-121 **GALA MARCEAU** 41 (H) **♦144**
W P Mullins (Ire) (Mr K Alexander) 10-9 **D E Mullins**
Shade fortunate to beat Lossiemouth at Leopardstown

13 3 **JE GARDE** 159 **--**
W P Mullins (Ire) (Mrs J Donnelly) 10-9 **M J M O'Sullivan**
Third in newcomers' race in France; first run for stable

14 1-112 **LOSSIEMOUTH** 41 (BF) **141**
W P Mullins (Ire) (Mrs S Ricci) 10-9 **P Townend**
Beat Gala Marceau at Leopardstown; excuses next time

15 11 **ZENTA** 20 (D) **131**
W P Mullins (Ire) (Mr John P McManus) 10-9 **M P Walsh**
Accounted for Hypotenus at Fairyhouse; more to come

13-8 Lossiemouth, 7-4 Blood Destiny, 4-1 Gala Marceau, 12-1 Zenta, 20-1 Jupiter Du Gite, 25-1 Ascending, 33-1 Hypotenus, Je Garde, Jipcot, Rightsotom, Gust Of Wind.

Rob Wright's choice: Gala Marceau beat Lossiemouth despite pulling hard at Leopardstown; she can improve **Dangers:** Blood Destiny, Lossiemouth

2.10 McCoy Contractors County Handicap Hurdle — ITV
(£56,270: 2m 1f) (26)

1 11-232 **SHARJAH** 27 (T,BF) **159**
W P Mullins (Ire) (Mrs S Ricci) 10-12-0 **Mr P W Mullins**
Still classy; stable won this with top weight in 2017

2 D-1154 **PIED PIPER** 40 (T,CD) **♦168**
G Elliott (Ire) (Caldwell Construction) 5-11-13 **D N Russell**
Tough tasks last twice in grade ones; likes this track

3 240-51 **WINTER FOG** 80 **148**
W P Mullins (Ire) (Triple Lock) 9-11-11 **K Callaghan (7)**
Clear-cut winner at Leopardstown; stiff task at weights

4 U-6152 **SAINT SAM** 12 (H,BF,D) **146**
W P Mullins (Ire) (Mr E J Ware) 6-11-11 **Jack Foley (3)**
Beaten favourite twice since Punchestown win over further

5 25-133 **FIRST STREET** 27 (W,T,BF) **152**
N Henderson (Lady & Alice Bamford) 6-11-11 **N De Boinville**
Last year's second 10lb higher now; has had wind op

6 505-03 **BALLYADAM** 40 (T,D) **144**
H De Bromhead (Ire) (C Park) 8-11-7 **Rachael Blackmore**
Good third at Leopardstown but 6lb rise looks harsh

7 1-1221 **AUCUNRISQUE** 34 **147**
C Gordon (Goodwin Racing Ltd) 7-11-6 **T Cannon**
Up 9lb for Newbury grade three win; soft ground issue

8 11-311 **HUNTERS YARN** 33 **143**
W P Mullins (Ire) (S Munir/I Souede) 6-11-6 **P Townend**
Impressed in Navan listed; could be well in

9 103135 **PRAIRIE DANCER** 103 (B,D) **141**
J P O'Brien (Ire) (S Sweeney/K O'hare) 5-11-3 **B J Powell**
Stiff tasks last twice; all six wins in spring/summer

10 4-4U30 **GLORY AND FORTUNE** 34 (T) **156**
T Lacey (Mr J Hinds) 8-11-3 **S Sheppard**
Last year's smart form now a distant memory

11 P-2130 **HIGHWAY ONE O TWO** 34 **148**
C Gordon (Mr A Ward-Thomas) 8-11-2 **Mr F Gordon (7)**
Appears held by others on latest Newbury running

12 106042 **ANNA BUNINA** 23 (T,D) **139**
J McConnell (Ire) (Ms C Ahearn) 7-11-2 **B Harvey (5)**
Ran well in this two years ago but weighted to hilt

13 5-F244 **MILKWOOD** 30 (H) **152**
N Mulholland (Ms Jo Bridel) 9-11-0 **S Twiston-Davies**
Third in 2021; blinkers on after two modest efforts

14 33-112 **FILEY BAY** 34 (T,BF,D) **141**
E Mullins (Ire) (Mr John P McManus) 7-11-0 **M P Walsh**
Closely matched with Aucunrisque; tongue-tie tried

15 33-323 **PINKERTON** 81 (T,BF,D) **143**
N Meade (Ire) (Mr P L Polly) 7-11-0 **S W Flanagan**
Could play a part back over more suitable distance

16 -11P41 **PATH D'OROUX** 55 **138**
G Cromwell (Ire) (French Connection) 6-11-0 **K M Donoghue**
Stiff assignments before Navan novice success

17 P-32P5 **PETIT TONNERRE** 27 (D) **141**
Jonjo O'Neill (Mr J P McManus) 5-10-13 **Jonjo O'Neill Jr**
Last four runs all over further; may do better

18 11-3P0 **HIGHLAND CHARGE** 33 **135**
N Meade (Ire) (Gigginstown House Stud) 8-10-12 **S Ewing**
Won weak grade three at Naas in March

19 133254 **GANAPATHI** 48 (P,T) **--**
P Neville (Mrs Wilma Duffus) 7-10-9 **A Doyle (5)**
Well beaten in this in 2021; has won two chases since

20 1-6101 **MAGNOR GLORY** 175 (H,D) **133**
T O'Brien (Ire) (Walsh/Sheahan) 7-10-9 **M J M O'Sullivan (3)**
Has done all his winning round sharp, flat tracks

21 1-0112 **PEMBROKE** 48 (BF) **137**
D Skelton (Jon and Julia Aisbitt) 6-10-9 **H Skelton**
Second in grade two here; back in trip

22 /1-212 **GIN COCO** 124 (BF,D) **133**
H Fry (David's Partnership) 7-10-8 **J J Burke**
In good form here in November; goes well fresh

23 305-4P **FAIVOIR** 34 (C,D) **132**
D Skelton (Mrs S Lawrence) 8-10-7 **Bridget Andrews**
Beaten 13 lengths in this last year; 9lb lower now

24 1-P04P **GLAN** 175 (H,D) **135**
G Elliott (Ire) (Mr John P McManus) 8-10-7 **L Dempsey**
Prefers good going; Galway beckons in the summer

25 /21F-3 **WONDERWALL** 112 (P) **132**
R Spencer (Rebel Jumping II) 7-10-7 **S Bowen**
No slouch; back hurdling with cheekpieces tried

26 222-0P **LUTTRELL LAD** 13 (D) **113**
T Lacey (Owners For Owners Luttrell Lad) 7-10-6 **H Cobden**
Fair novice early last season; saddle slipped latest

5-1 Filey Bay, 11-2 Hunters Yarn, 8-1 Sharjah, Pembroke, Gin Coco, 12-1 Winter Fog, 14-1 Aucunrisque, Path D'Oroux, Wonderwall, 16-1 others.

Wright choice: Pembroke drops in trip after travelling strongly for a long way in grade two company here **Dangers:** Magnor Glory, Glory And Fortune

2.50 Albert Bartlett Novices' Hurdle — ITV
(Grade I: £75,964: 3m) (20)

1 1-11F6 **AFFORDALE FURY** 68 **133**
N Meade (Ire) (Mr P L Polly) 5-11-7 **S Ewing**
Well beaten in first grade one at Naas latest; up in trip

2 10-111 **CHIANTI CLASSICO** 69 **133**
K Bailey (Sir Francis Brooke & R A Pilkington) 6-11-7 **D Bass**
Simple task in Wincanton handicap; big hike in class

3 512111 **CORBETTS CROSS** 19 (D) **138**
E Mullins (Ire) (Mr John P McManus) 6-11-7 **M P Walsh**
Naas (2m) grade two winner; will relish return to this trip

4 3113 **DAWN RISING** 68 **♦143**
J P O'Brien (Ire) (Mr John P McManus) 6-11-7 **L Dempsey**
Third to Champ Kiely at Naas (2m4f); trip should suit

5 15-241 **EMBASSY GARDENS** 54 **118**
W P Mullins (Ire) (S & B Mulryan) 7-11-7 **P Townend**
Won Thurles novice from four previous winners over trip

6 /2-111 **FAVORI DE CHAMPDOU** 80 **136**
G Elliott (Ire) (Gigginstown House Stud) 8-11-7 **J Gainford**
Promising grade two scorer; four wins going right-handed

7 C-112 **HIDDENVALLEY LAKE** 29 (T,BF,D) **128**
H De Bromhead (Ire) (Robcour) 6-11-7 **Rachael Blackmore**
Not disgraced under penalty at Clonmel; tongue-tie on

8 1-13P **IDALKO BIHOUE** 48 **136**
N Twiston-Davies (A-M & J Shepperd) 5-11-7 **J Nailor**
Pulled up first try at this distance at Doncaster

9 1/2421 **LETSBECLEARABOUTIT** 60 (D) **133**
G Cromwell (Ire) (Alymer Stud Ltd) 8-11-7 **K M Donoghue**
Cantered up at Punchestown; held by others earlier form

10 224-21 **MONTY'S STAR** 29 (D) **127**
H De Bromhead (Ire) (Mr B Maloney) 6-11-7 **S W Flanagan**
Edged stablemate Hiddenvalley Lake (gave 6lb) at Clonmel

11 P3-121 **ROCK MY WAY** 48 (C) **138**
Syd Hosie (N Case, S Hosie, J Romans) 5-11-7 **N Scholfield**
Grade two course winner over three furlongs less in January

12 141-5F **SAINT PALAIS** 27 **106**
R Bandey (Syders & Burkes) 6-11-7 **H Bannister**
Ran well until falling at Haydock; all four wins over fences

13 2-0213 **SANDOR CLEGANE** 41 **129**
P Nolan (Ire) (Mrs Browne & Mrs Coffey) 6-11-7 **S O'Keeffe**
Improved with emphasis on stamina; grade one third latest

14 4-6321 **SEABANK BISTRO** 47 **124**
W P Mullins (Ire) (Jodmart Ltd) 6-11-7 **Mr P W Mullins**
Second to Corbetts Cross before Naas (2m3f) maiden win

S THE SILKS THE TIPS

ALAN CROWHURST/GETTY IMAGES



Home By The Lee survived a bad blunder at the sixth en route to finishing fifth in the Stayers' Hurdle

15 1-133 **SEARCH FOR GLORY** 29 117
G Elliott (Ire) (Gigginstown House) 6-11-7 D N Russell
Beaten for toe in slowly-run grade three at Clonmel

16 01-41 **SHANBALLY KID** 55 129
W P Mullins (Ire) (Gigginstown House) 6-11-7 D E Mullins
Beat Monty's Star in Navan maiden (2m4f); up in trip

17 1-12 **STAY AWAY FAY** 48 (T,BF) 136
P Nicholls (Mr C Giles & Mr D Staddon) 6-11-7 H Cobden
Unlucky in Doncaster grade two latest; unproven on soft

18 -111P1 **THOMAS MOR** 27 (D) 128
D Pipe (Wayne Clifford & Ian Gosden) 6-11-7 A Wedge
Won class three handicap at Ascot; surface not ideal

19 1-1321 **THREE CARD BRAG** 51 138
G Elliott (Ire) (McNeill/P & S Brycela) 6-11-7 A P Heskin
Has looked smart in small fields over shorter; bred to stay

20 11-310 **WEVEALLBEENCAUGHT** 41 (C) 136
N Twiston-Davies (J & S Wenman) 6-11-7S Twiston-Davies
Course winner stopped as if something amiss last time

10-3 Corbetts Cross, 7-2 Three Card Brag, 8-1 Hiddenvalley Lake, Embassy Gardens, 10-1 Favori De Champdou, 12-1 Sandor Clegane, 14-1 others.

Wright choice: Corbetts Cross made a winning start for his new yard and is unexposed at this trip **Dangers:** Three Card Brag, Embassy Gardens

3.30 Boodles Cheltenham Gold Cup Chase ITV
(Grade I: £351,688: 3m 2f) (13)

1 1-5351 **AHOY SENOR** 48 (C) 166
L Russell (Wymer & Russell) 8-11-10 D R Fox
Put in his place by Bravemansgame three times

2 /121-P **A PLUS TARD** 118 (T,BF,CD) --
H De Bromhead (Ire) (C Park) 9-11-10Rachael Blackmore
Last year's easy winner; a rare blip last time at Haydock

3 114-11 **BRAVEMANSGAME** 81 172
P Nicholls (John Dance and Bryan Drew) 8-11-10 H Cobden
Left well clear in Kempton's King George; progressive

4 1F2-31 **CONFLATED** 79 168
G Elliott (Ire) (Gigginstown House) 9-11-10 D N Russell
Form of Leopardstown win looks below what is required

5 0-2245 **ELDORADO ALLEN** 34 (P,T,C) 164
Joe Tizzard (J P Romans & Terry Warner) 9-11-10B J Powell
Yet to win from seven tries at top level

6 1F1-11 **GALOPIN DES CHAMPS** 41 ♦ 175
W P Mullins (Ire) (Mrs Audrey Turley) 7-11-10 P Townend
First-class in four grade ones; should stay beyond 3m

7 1-21U1 **HEWICK** 153 (P) 167
J J Hanlon (Ire) (Mr T J McDonald) 8-11-10 J Gainford
Galway Plate winner has shot up ratings; ground concerns

8 P22-P1 **MINELLA INDO** 75 (CD) 158
H De Bromhead (Ire) (Mr B Maloney) 10-11-10M P Walsh
Great festival record but 25 years since last winning 10yo

9 1-P113 **NOBLE YEATS** 48 (P) 169
E Mullins (Ire) (Mr Robert Waley-Cohen) 8-11-10 S Bowen
Close third to Ahoy Senor here; grade-one debut today

10 134-14 **PROTEKTORAT** 48 (T,BF,C,D) 170
D Skelton (Ferguson/Mason/Hales) 8-11-10 H Skelton
Last year's third; same place behind Ahoy Senor last time

11 1255-2 **ROYALE PAGAILLE** 81 (D) 162
V Williams (Mrs S Ricci) 9-11-10 C Deutsch
Sixth and fifth in previous editions; too slow at this level

12 2-1422 **SOUNDS RUSSIAN** 48 (D) 162
Ruth Jefferson (Claxby & Co) 8-11-10 Sean Quinlan
Kelso specialist's grade one debut; just held by Ahoy Senor

13 111-22 **STATTLER** 41 (C) 168
W P Mullins (Ire) (Mr R Bartlett) 8-11-10Mr P W Mullins
Eight lengths to find with Galopin Des Champs; stays well

7-4 Galopin Des Champs, 6-1 Bravemansgame, A Plus Tard, 7-1 Noble Yeats, 8-1 Stattler, 12-1 Protektorat, 14-1 Conflated, 16-1 Minella Indo, Ahoy Senor.

Wright choice: Galopin Des Champs would be unbeaten over fences but for falling at the last here a year ago **Dangers:** A Plus Tard, Noble Yeats

4.10 St. James's Place Festival Challenge Cup Open Hunters' Chase ITV
(5-Y-O plus: 24,445: 3m 2f) (24)

1 11-121 **BILLAWAY** 34 (B,T,CD) 133
W P Mullins (Ire) (Turner Family) 11-12-0Mr P W Mullins
Winner and twice second in this race; all out at Naas latest

2 641-11 **BLACK OP** 61 (T) --
E Clark (Mr Charles R Clark) 12-12-0 Mr J Dawson
Has had easy tasks in last three point-to-points

3 /122F- **BOB AND CO** 364 (T,D) --
Harry Derham (Mr D Maxwell) 12-12-0 Miss A Stevens
No luck twice in this race when in top three of market

4 121F11 **BRAIN POWER** 48 --
W Ewing (Mr W Ewing) 12-12-0 Mr D McGill
Has found his niche late in life in point-to-points

5 2102-5 **CAT TIGER** 119 (T,BF) 120
P Nicholls (Mr David Maxwell) 9-12-0 Mr C Sprake
Had wind op after Aintree second; disappointing return

6 /U0-11 **CHRIS'S DREAM** 61 --
H De Bromhead (Ire) (Robcour) 11-12-0Miss M O'Sullivan
Enjoying life in point-to-points after 10 months off

7 11-133 **DANDY DAN** 19 (CD) 120
J Bourne (Mr P J Andrews) 10-12-0 Mr J King
Up in grade, no match for Vaucelet at Stratford in May

8 311-32 **DORKING COCK** 81 (P,T) 130
S Crawford (Ire) (S R B Crawford) 9-12-0 Mr B Crawford
Neck second to Vaucelet at Down Royal; ground suits

9 -P1111 **FAMOUS CLERMONT** 27 143
C R Barber (Biddiscombe, Rousell) 8-12-0 Mr W Biddick
Promising; only flop in hunters was on this course

10 1-2211 **GO GO GERONIMO** 47 (P,T) 117
Miss K Morgan (Mr J C-Roberts) 8-12-0 Mr T C-Roberts
Model of consistency but in much lesser company

11 156-11 **I K BRUNEL** 24 123
A Hill (Mr M W Redman) 9-12-0 Miss Izzie Marshall
Won class five hunter chase at Taunton; this is harder

12 P22311 **ITS ON THE LINE** 26 (P) 127
E Mullins (Ire) (Emmet Mullins) 6-12-0 Mr D O'Connor
Doing well in small fields; merits respect

13 /34221 **LE MALIN** 19 133
S McParlan (Ire) (Mr S McParlan) 9-12-0 Mr N McParlan
Has decent form with both Billaway and Vaucelet

14 1P3-P4 **MIGHTY STOWAWAY** 76 (P,T) --
A Hill (Mr N Sutton) 12-12-0 Mr B Sutton
Sixth and third in this race; hard to see improvement

15 -25321 **MORATORIUM** 19 (P) 123
M Osborne (Mrs L Osborne) 10-12-0 Mr M McIntyre
Capable in points but 0-9 over regulation fences

16 -2P2F1 **MYTH BUSTER** 20 (P) --
Mrs Sara V Bradstock (Buzz Synd) 10-12-0Miss L Bradstock
Half-brother to Kicking King but not in the same class

17 11-412 **NOT THAT FUISSE** 24 (BF) 134
D Skelton (Mr Colm Donlon) 10-12-0 Mr J Andrews
No match for Vaucelet at Stratford in May

18 1P1-11 **PREMIER MAGIC** 40 (P,T) --
B Gibbs (Mr Julian Sherriff) 10-12-0 Mr B Gibbs
Smart hunter, four lengths behind Vaucelet at Stratford

19 -11111 **ROCKY'S HOWYA** 40 --
D Queally (Ire) (Mrs M C Kiely) 7-12-0Mr M C O'Donovan
Making hay in Irish point-to-points; first run for stable

20 01/611 **SECRET INVESTOR** 28 (P,T) ♦ 150
P Nicholls (Mr C J Hitchings) 11-12-0 Miss N Parker
Grade two winner over shorter; lightly-raced these days

21 -5112U **SHANTOU FLYER** 12 (B,T,BF,C,D) 141
S Loxton (Worldwide Hospitality) 13-12-0 Miss O Nicholls
Placed at four festivals, including twice in this race

22 -11102 **THE STORYTELLER** 33 (P,C) 131
G Elliott (Ire) (Mrs Pat Sloan) 12-12-0 Mr J Codd
Festival winner in 2018; in fine form between the flags

23 1-2111 **VAUCELET** 81 140
D M Christie (Ire) (S J Hegarty) 8-12-0 Mr B O'Neill
Bad mistake last when close second to Billaway in April

24 1-1256 **WOTZIZNAME** 19 (T,D) 120
Mrs D Ward (Miss L B Gould) 13-12-0 Miss M Bevan
Useful round Newton Abbot; this is different ball game

5-2 Vaucelet, 6-1 Famous Clermont, 7-1 Billaway, 8-1 Chris's Dream, 12-1 Secret Investor, Bob And Co, Rocky's Howya, 16-1 The Storyteller, Its On The Line.

Wright choice: Vaucelet has won six of his eight starts in this sphere and is open to further improvement **Dangers:** Billaway, Chris's Dream

4.50 Mrs Paddy Power Mares' Chase
(£67,524: 2m 5f) (9)

1 311-11 **ALLEGORIE DE VASSY** 54 (T) 147
W P Mullins (Ire) (Mrs S Ricci) 6-11-5 P Townend
Unbeaten since joining stable, all on right-handed tracks

2 11-244 **ELIMAY** 34 (B,T,CD) 137
W P Mullins (Ire) (Mr John P McManus) 9-11-5 M P Walsh
Last year's winner below form last twice; blinkers tried

3 65-111 **IMPERVIOUS** 61 141
Colm Murphy (Ire) (Mr John P McManus) 7-11-5 B Hayes
Form of Cork and Punchestown wins both look solid

4 253-24 **RIVIERE D'ETEL** 110 (BF) 148
G Elliott (Ire) (Bective Stud) 6-11-5 D N Russell
Off for four months; tendency to jump right not ideal here

5 21-312 **DOLCITA** 75 (D) 144
W P Mullins (Ire) (Sullivan Bloodstock) 8-11-2 D E Mullins
All three wins over fences right-handed in listed class

6 631151 **JEREMYS FLAME** 49 (H) ♦ 150
G Cromwell (Ire) (Flushfarm Synd) 9-11-2 K M Donoghue
Having 11th run in graded class but first at Cheltenham

7 0-1221 **MAGIC DAZE** 34 (T) 148
H De Bromhead (Ire) (Robcour) 7-11-2Rachael Blackmore
Beat Dinoblue at Naas (2m); trip may stretch her stamina

8 2-6341 **PINK LEGEND** 33 (CD) 142
V Williams (Mr Francis Mahon) 9-11-2 C Deutsch
Only beaten half a length by Elimay here last year

9 3-2112 **ZAMBELLA** 49 (BF,D) 144
N Twiston-Davies (S Munir & I Souede) 8-11-2 D Jacob
Multiple winner over fences but none in this grade

11-8 Allegorie De Vassy, 9-4 Impervious, 11-2 Jeremys Flame, 10-1 Magic Daze, 16-1 Riviere D'etel, 20-1 Elimay, Zambella, 33-1 Pink Legend, Dolcita.

Wright choice: Impervious has taken really well to fences this season, winning all three starts **Dangers:** Allegorie De Vassy, Magic Daze

5.30 Martin Pipe Conditional Jockeys' Handicap Hurdle
(£39,022: 2m 4f) (26)

1 14B002 **FELIX DESJY** 55 (P) 145
G Elliott (Ire) (Mr A Dunlop) 10-11-12 C McGivern
Likely to find younger rivals too good at the weights

2 232-02 **MIGHT I** 48 (T) 146
H Fry (Brian & Sandy Lambert) 7-11-12 L Murtagh
Grade one second respected in first-time tongue-tie

3 -61124 **COOL SURVIVOR** 41 128
G Elliott (Ire) (Gigginstown House Stud) 6-11-7 S Ewing
Good fourth to Good Land in Leopardstown grade one

4 0-1352 **MOLLY OLLYS WISHES** 34 (T,D) ♦ 147
D Skelton (Mr Dean Pugh) 9-11-7 F Gillard
Weak finisher here; more of a flat-track bully

5 1-1222 **IMAGINE** 33 138
G Elliott (Ire) (Caldwell Construction Ltd) 5-11-6 B Harvey
Navan (2m) second to Hunters Yarn; chance if he stays

6 -101F1 **MARK OF GOLD** 20 (D) 129
G L Moore (Stevie Fisher & Friends) 6-11-6 C Quinn
Won Kempton class three in style but 10lb higher

7 13P-10 **NO ORDINARY JOE** 34 (D) 139
N Henderson (Mr John P McManus) 7-11-6 Luca Morgan
Both wins over this trip were in modest company

8 244-11 **IROKO** 62 (T,D) 138
O Greenall & J Guerriero (J P McManus) 5-11-5 A P Kelly
Both wins at Wetherby over similar trip; on upgrade

9 -01286 **SPIRIT OF LEGEND** 20 (D) 135
H De Bromhead (Ire) (C Jones) 6-11-4 M P O'Connor
Ran flat last time but lightly-raced and has scope

10 111515 **SAYLAVEE** 48 129
W P Mullins (Ire) (Ecurie Maclennan) 6-11-4 Jack Foley
Punchestown listed winner prefers good going

11 005321 **WEST TO THE BRIDGE** 10 (P,T,D) 133
D Skelton (Mr J Tierney) 10-11-4(5ex) T Durrell
Sandown winner has it to do under a penalty

12 1322 **SPANISH HARLEM** 36 (BF) 139
W P Mullins (Ire) (S Fitzgerald) 5-11-2 M J M O'Sullivan
Fair novice; trainer has won this with three 5yos

13 300-04 **AU FLEURON** 76 (P) 127
G Elliott (Ire) (Bective Stud) 6-11-2 K E Buckley
Beaten around 10 lengths when 40-1 in this last year

14 -22111 **IRISH HILL** 27 (D) 128
P Nicholls (Sir Martin Broughton) 5-11-1 A Cheleda
Completed hat-trick in class two handicap at Ascot

15 312331 **FIRM FOOTINGS** 33 130
G Elliott (Ire) (Caldwell Construction) 5-11-1 S Fitzgerald
Navan maiden scorer will appreciate return to this trip

16 /21F-3 **WONDERWALL** 112 (P) --
R Spencer (Rebel Jumping II) 7-11-1 Doubtful
Doubly engaged; runs in 2.10

17 -51431 **IMPULSIVE ONE** 30 (T,D) 132
N Henderson (S Munir & I Souede) 5-11-0 B Bromley
Narrow winner at Wetherby on first try at this trip

18 404-0P **IN FROM THE COLD** F30 121
G Elliott (Ire) (Pioneer Racing) 6-11-0 Danny Gilligan
Without a win over hurdles since Wexford in 2021

19 626-01 **HAXO** 46 (D) 123
W P Mullins (Ire) (Noel Fehily) 6-10-13 Kieran Callaghan
Showed improvement to land Punchestown maiden

20 006122 **BUDDY ONE** 22 (D) 109
P Gilligan (Ire) (E Lynch/TQuinn) 6-10-12 Jack G Gilligan
Touched off by Sa Fureur at Thurles; form let down here

21 101412 **GROZNI** 41 (D) 127
C Byrnes (Ire) (Mr Cathal Byrnes) 7-10-11 Doubtful
Declared a non-runner yesterday

22 26-P52 **HOLLOW SOUND** 26 119
L Comer (Ire) (Mr Luke Comer) 8-10-10 Charlie O'Dwyer
0-9 over hurdles; likely pacesetter

23 UP4153 **HEY JOHNNY** 19 125
T Mullins (Ire) (Mr Joseph M Fitzpatrick) 6-10-8 Doubtful
Bits of fair form but this trip is new territory

24 021-P0 **FIFTY BALL** 27 115
G L Moore (Mr Steven Packham) 8-10-7 N F Houlihan
Long way adrift in this last year; currently out of sorts

25 -63205 **INNATENDUE** F9 (T,BF) 120
A J Martin (Ire) (Alymer Stud Ltd) 5-10-6 Doubtful
Has failed to confirm promise shown on debut

26 21-0P0 **VULTAN** 19 (T) 93
A J Martin (Ire) (Newtown Anner) 6-10-5 Doubtful
Little encouragement since changing stables

4-1 Spanish Harlem, 9-2 Imagine, 5-1 Cool Survivor, 8-1 Iroko, 10-1 Might I, Irish Hill, 14-1 Firm Footings, 16-1 Haxo, 20-1 others.

Wright choice: Imagine was a fair second to Hunters Yarn at Navan and is sure to appreciate this stiffer test **Dangers:** Spanish Harlem, Might I

● Comments by Steve Dillon

No fairytale winner, but tide of goodwill proved a fitting tribute



RICK BROADBENT

Just before the start of the 4.50 at Cheltenham, a man in a dark coat with a bold red tie leant on the rail down by the finishing post. The photographers, stable-hands, VIPs and well-wishers parted and took their positions and Henry de Bromhead was alone in his thoughts if by no means alone.

This was how the trainer watched the Jack de Bromhead Mares' Novices' Hurdle, the race named in honour of his son. Jack died in September, aged only 13, when his pony in a beach race veered into the sea and he suffered a devastating blow to the head. At the funeral his grandfather spoke of dreams shattered in "the dark, murky, Atlantic waters that wash onto Rossbeigh beach", but there has been a tide of goodwill dousing the grief this week. For those few minutes De Bromhead remained on his rail staring at a giant screen. Who knows what he was thinking but he had five among the 21 runners and perhaps it was simply that. Ever since Michael O'Leary, the Ryanair boss and race sponsor, had said he wanted to rename the race after Jack, the bereaved father had said he planned to do a Willie Mullins and flood the field.

His best chance was deemed to be Magical Zoe, a horse that had won at Wexford on the day Jack died. And there was Rachael Blackmore adding her magic to Foxy Girl's challenge. Aidan Coleman was also part of the cavalry charge on Ladybank. A day after the accident, Coleman had won at Fontwell and sent his thoughts to his boss in a TV interview. He said it felt "a very meagre thing", but the thoughts do count. De Bromhead said



De Bromhead, centre, with the Ryanair Chase trophy, is flanked by his daughters,

Fakenham
Rob Wright

1.00 Al Zaraqaan
1.40 Doireann
2.20 Nothingtochance
3.00 Le Tueur
3.45 Rare Middleton
4.20 Pride Of Hawridge
5.00 Bennys King

Going: good to soft — **Racing TV**

1.00 Claiming Hurdle (£4,357: 2m) (6)
1 11050 **AL ZARAQAAN** 20 (B,CD) A Watson 6-12-0 **G Sheehan**
2 4/ **MY BOY GRIZZLE** 723 (BF) C Ellam 8-12-0 **B Poste**
3 -510P **LET'S HAVE ANOTHER** 24 (B) O Murphy 7-11-11 **F Gregory**
4 FPPP4 **US AND THEM** 44 (B,T,D) A Jones 10-11-9 **J Best**
5 23-13 **WEEBILL** 44 (P,T,BF,CD) O Murphy 11-11-5 **Daire Davis (7)**
6 1F/5- **TONYX** F20 (BF) Miss A Murphy 7-11-4 **J Quinlan**

7-4 Weebill, 9-4 Al Zaraqaan, 7-2 Us And Them, 8-1 Let's Have Another, 12-1 Tonyx, 25-1 My Boy Grizzle.

1.40 Handicap Chase (£4,489: 3m) (5)
1 061P1 **MAD ABOUT SALLY** 39 O Signy 8-12-2 **G Sheehan**
2 -4221 **BRANDISOVA** 43 L Wadham 7-11-1 **Bryony Frost**
3 -2P26 **DOIREANN** 25 (P) S Edmunds 6-11-0 **C Gethings**
4 03411 **MIXEDWAVE** 24 (D) Mrs P Sly 6-10-11 **Paul O'Brien**
5 61223 **CLOUDY WEDNESDAY** 12 (P,BF,C) C Fryer 7-10-9 **L Stones**

6-4 Mad About Sally, 2-1 Mixedwave, 9-2 Brandisova, 8-1 Doireann, 10-1 Cloudy Wednesday.

2.20 Maiden Hurdle (£4,629: 2m) (9)
1 3 **BUGLE MAJOR** 17 A Watson 8-11-6 **G Sheehan**
2 5P263 **ENTHUSED** 12 (P) James Owen 6-11-6 **Mr A Chadwick (7)**
3 **LUCID DREAMS** J P Ryan (Ire) 8-11-6 **T Gillard (3)**
4 -P6F5 **MONYMUSK LAD** 36 (T) L Horsfall 7-11-6 **Charlie Price (3)**
5 30P5P **OLLY'S FOLLY** 24 (B) M Gillard 9-11-6 **J M Davies**
6 PP/6 **SKEETER PARK** 11 M Appleby 6-11-6 **C Hammond**
7 -654P **MISTRAL NELL** 18 (D) L Wadham 6-10-13 **Bryony Frost**
8 20-02 **NOTHINGTOCHANCE** 44 A King 6-10-13 **T Bellamy**
9 0 **OVERSTATE** 15 (P) S Edmunds 4-10-10 **C Gethings**

6-4 Nothingtochance, 7-2 Enthused, 9-2 Mistral Nell, 6-1 Bugle Major, 10-1 Overstate, 16-1 Lucid Dreams, 25-1 others.

3.00 Handicap Chase (£4,489: 3m 5f) (5)
1 -3226 **ENDURING LOVE** 2 (B,T,BF) O Murphy 11-12-0 **Doubtful**
2 32221 **LE TUEUR** 12 (P,T) S Humphrey 8-12-0(7ex) **J Tidball (7)**
3 -25P3 **HOLDBACKTHERIVER** 36 (B,T) E Williams 11-11-7 **Isabel Williams (3)**
4 /3-10 **VETONCALL** 64 (P,C) A Jones 11-10-10 **J Brace (7)**
5 4331- **LAWTOP LEGEND** 575 (B) Dr R Newland 11-10-10 **C Hammond**

10-11 Le Tueur, 3-1 Lawtop Legend, 7-2 Holdbacktheriver, 10-1 Vetoncall.

3.45 Handicap Hurdle (£13,202: 2m) (9)
1 24-04 **TAKEIT EASY** 32 (D) Mrs P Sly 8-12-1 **B Harris (7)**
2 /3121 **PARRAMOUNT** 49 (T,D) C Longsdon 7-11-13 **A Coleman**
3 50024 **HAAFAPIECE** 41 (BF,C,D) Mrs P Sly 10-11-12 **J Brace (7)**
4 35325 **SWAFFHAM BULBECK** F48 (CD) S Edmunds 9-11-11 **C Gethings**
5 10122 **NO NO TONIC** 20 (B,T) M Gillard 9-11-10 **T Gillard (3)**
6 F-412 **BIG BOY BOBBY** 80 (D) A King 5-11-9 **T Bellamy**
7 01360 **CHASAMAX** 162 (P,D) S-J Davies 8-11-6 **J Best**
8 40FP5 **GLIMPSE OF GOLD** 22 (T,CD) S Humphrey 12-10-13 **J Tidball (7)**
9 13 **RARE MIDDLETON** 20 (D) P Nicholls 4-10-12 **Bryony Frost**

5-2 Rare Middleton, 7-2 Parramount, 4-1 Big Boy Bobby, 6-1 No No Tonic, 8-1 Haafapiece, 12-1 Swaffham Bulbeck, 14-1 Takeit Easy, 20-1 others.

4.20 Handicap Hurdle (£4,225: 2m 4f) (8)
1 22P53 **CITY ROLLER** 20 (P) L Horsfall 5-12-1 **Charlie Price (3)**
2 46124 **BASHERS REFLECTION** 30 (T) B Case 6-12-0 **J Quinlan**
3 6521/ **MANOFTHEMOMENT** 712 (D) C Fryer 9-11-13 **L Stones (5)**
4 /PF00 **WHAT WILL BE** 31 (P,T) O Murphy 7-11-6 **F Gregory**
5 0643 **PRIDE OF HAWRIDGE** 22 (P,BF) S Edmunds 5-11-5 **C Gethings**
6 -465P **DYNALI** 186 (P,T) S-J Davies 7-10-11 **J Best**
7 0-000 **CELINE MAN** 168 (P) M Fahey (Ire) 5-10-11 **Paul O'Brien**
8 10P00 **ROLLING RIVER** 53 (W,T) O Signy 5-10-9 **G Sheehan**

2-1 Pride Of Hawridge, 9-4 Bashers Reflection, 7-1 City Roller, 8-1 Manofthemoment, Dynali, 12-1 Rolling River, 14-1 others.

5.00 Open Hunters' Chase (£2,566: 3m) (8)
1 1-033 **PEACOCKS SECRET** 26 (P,BF,CD) D Peters 11-12-6 **Mr D Peters (3)**
2 -PP1U **BENNYS KING** 27 (P) D Skelton 12-12-2 **Miss H Palin (7)**
3 21P63 **ZEE MAN** 11 (C) F Hutsby 9-12-2 **Mr Z Baker**
4 11-P4 **REBEL DAWN RISING** 294 D Kemp 9-12-0 **Mr A Chadwick (5)**
5 0-P34 **GABORIOT** 28 O Greenall & J Guerriero 7-11-12 **Mr George Cowley (7)**
6 UF423 **GENERAL CUSTARD** 19 (P) David Bingham 10-11-12 **Mr H Crow (5)**
7 34P-3 **MISTER WHITAKER** 35 (T) D McCain 11-11-12 **Miss G Andrews**
8 5-432 **SIR JACK YEATS** 28 (B,CD) F O'Brien 12-11-12 **Miss Fern O'Brien (5)**

5-6 Bennys King, 6-1 Mister Whitaker, 13-2 Gaboriot, 8-1 Peacocks Secret, 10-1 Sir Jack Yeats, 14-1 Rebel Dawn Rising, 16-1 General Custard, 33-1 Zee Man.

Wolverhampton
Rob Wright

4.35 Odd Socks Havana
5.20 Seattle King
6.00 King Athelstan
6.30 Jenny Ren
7.00 Asian Queen
7.30 Gustav Graves
8.00 Dreams Delivered
8.30 Poetic Force

Going: standard — **Sky Sports Racing**
Draw: 5f-7f, low numbers best

4.35 Handicap (Div I: £4,292: 1m 142yd) (10)
1 (2) 15141 **WIN WIN POWER** 8 (P) M Appleby 6-10-2(5ex) **Rossa Ryan**
2 (5) 22410 **BRAVE DISPLAY** 17 (B,E,C) P McEntee 9-9-11 **K Stott**
3 (3) -4252 **HE'S OUR STAR** 16 (B,C) A Carroll 8-9-9 **L Morris**
4 (9) 600-0 **MUTALAAQY** 17 A Carson 5-9-8 **W Carson**
5 (6) 6-514 **RED EVELYN** 20 S Pearce 5-9-7 **F Larson (3)**
6 (8) 40-05 **LADYPACKSAPUNCH** 13 G Harris 4-9-7 **K O'Neill**
7 (4) 53101 **ODD SOCKS HAVANA** 14 (P,T,CD) R Menzies 5-9-5 **P J McDonald**
8 (10) 44-61 **RIVAS ROB ROY** 16 (B,C) J Gallagher 8-9-5 **Kaiya Fraser (7)**
9 (1) 0-052 **QAABIL** 13 (BF) Peter Fahey (Ire) 7-9-0 **David Egan**
10 (7) 44000 **FAST FLO** 8 (B,H) C Dunnett 4-9-0 **J Haynes**

7-4 Win Win Power, 4-1 Qaabil, 6-1 Odd Socks Havana, 7-1 He's Our Star, 8-1 Rivas Rob Roy, 10-1 Brave Display, 12-1 Red Evelyn, 16-1 Ladypacksapunch.

5.20 Handicap (Div II: £4,292: 1m 142yd) (10)
1 (6) 000-6 **HANDEL** 42 C Banham 5-9-11 **J Haynes**
2 (3) 00435 **KODEBREAKER** 8 M Herrington 4-9-10 **A Keeley (5)**
3 (9) 0630- **DAMASCUS FINISH** J22 (BF) B Johnson 4-9-9 **M Ghiani**
4 (4) 5135- **LILANDRA** 156 (P) J Flint 6-9-8 **W Cox**
5 (10) 64/03 **DESERT MIRACLE** 21 (BF) K P De Foy 4-9-7 **D Probert**
6 (5) 4000- **GILBERT** 164 A West 4-9-7 **C Bennett**
7 (8) 60443 **SEATTLE KING** 8 (B) P McEntee 4-9-5 **K Stott**
8 (1) 0530- **THE LION STRIKES** 98 J G O'Shea 4-9-2 **Gina Mangan (5)**
9 (2) 0-355 **SOMEDAYONEDAYNEVER** 13 (B) A Carroll 4-9-0 **L Morris**
10 (7) -0000 **NAADYAA** 16 Joseph Parr 4-9-0 **Josephine Gordon**

11-4 Desert Miracle, 9-2 Kodebreaker, 5-1 Seattle King, 7-1 Gilbert, Damascus Finish, 8-1 Lilandra, 12-1 The Lion Strikes, 14-1 Handel.

6.00 Classified Stakes (£4,292: 1m 4f) (11)
1 (9) 03261 **KING ATHELSTAN** 8 (T,V,D) Sara Ender 8-9-7 **Joanna Mason**
2 (7) 00-45 **BUFORD** 8 (T) Ewan Whillans 5-9-3 **K Stott**
3 (11) 50-32 **CLIFFS OF MALTA** 8 M Roberts 5-9-3 **D Probert**
4 (5) 0-000 **GLINT OF AN EYE** 35 (P,T) J Flint 6-9-3 **W Cox**
5 (4) -0364 **HAMMY END** 8 (H,P,D) W Muir & C Grassick 7-9-3 **P J McDonald**
6 (2) 52533 **MISS SLIGO** 8 (B,T,D) J Osborne 6-9-3 **S Osborne**
7 (1) 4-000 **ROGAN'S FANCY** 8 (B,T) Sara Ender 7-9-3 **A Jary (7)**
8 (10) 0-005 **RUSHMORE** 18 (D) C Banham 5-9-3 **J Haynes**
9 (8) 236/0 **STEVIE MCKEANE** 39 M Young 6-9-3 **K O'Neill**
10 (3) 60066 **TWO TWO TIME** 18 (V) P McEntee 5-9-3 **Josephine Gordon**
11 (6) 520-4 **NACHOS CHEESE** 18 (T) Joseph Parr 4-9-2 **H Burns (3)**

9-4 King Athelstan, 7-2 Cliffs Of Malta, 5-1 Miss Sligo, 6-1 Hammy End, 10-1 Rushmore, 12-1 Nachos Cheese, Glint Of An Eye, 16-1 Buford.

6.30 Handicap (£4,292: 1m 4f) (9)
1 (8) 0000- **CARLOS FELIX** 147 (P,D) P Kirby 6-9-11 **D Costello**
2 (1) -0551 **ABSTRACT** 9 (D) A Carroll 5-9-10(5ex) **A Rawlinson**
3 (4) 462-0 **INCHBAE** 42 (P) M Fahey (Ire) 4-9-8 **D Probert**
4 (6) 00-06 **PERUVIAN SUMMER** 13 J Stimpson 7-9-8 **A Keeley (5)**
5 (7) 4-530 **YOUNG WINSTON** 17 (H) J Mackie 4-9-7 **P J McDonald**
6 (5) 46265 **PERSIAN WOLF** 6 (B) P McEntee 5-9-5 **K Stott**
7 (2) 12615 **MOON OVER THE SEA** 17 (BF,CD) A Carroll 4-9-5 **Rossa Ryan**
8 (9) 36-26 **JENNY REN** 39 (CD) Sarah Hollinshead 8-9-5 **Gina Mangan (5)**
9 (3) -0000 **JOHN THE PIRATE** 17 P Kirby 4-8-13 **Madi Patzelt (7)**

5-2 Abstract, 3-1 Inchbae, 5-1 Moon Over The Sea, 6-1 Jenny Ren, 8-1 Young Winston, 10-1 Persian Wolf, 14-1 Carlos Felix, 25-1 others.

7.00 Novice Stakes (£10,152: 5f) (8)
1 (6) 0 **LOCO LOBO** 38 (H) L Williamson 5-9-9 **K O'Neill**
2 (3) 32520 **CUBAN GREY** 6 (P,T) R Cowell 3-9-4 **M Ghiani**
3 (2) 16- **OPEN MARKET** 290 (D) K R Burke 3-9-4 **C Lee**
4 (1) **RHYTHM N HOOVES** A Watson 3-9-2 **H Crouch**
5 (4) 43- **ASIAN QUEEN** 265 R Cowell 3-8-13 **L Morris**
6 (8) **DELLA** A Balding 3-8-13 **D Probert**
7 (7) 0 **LADY GAZELLE** 11 H Evans 3-8-11 **W Cox**
8 (5) 50-30 **PINK STRIPES** 13 L Williamson 3-8-11 **J F Egan**

13-8 Open Market, 7-2 Cuban Grey, 4-1 Della, 5-1 Rhythm N Hooves, 7-1 Asian Queen, 33-1 Lady Gazelle, 50-1 Pink Stripes, Loco Lobo.

7.30 Handicap (£4,292: 5f) (11)
1 (10) -3040 **FRISKY** 29 (D) S Pearce 4-9-10 **F Larson (3)**
2 (4) 50-00 **LYNNS BOY** 35 (T,D) J Butler 5-9-9 **L Morris**
3 (1) -2654 **ARAIFJAN** 15 (C,D) M Herrington 6-9-9 **F Marsh**
4 (3) -0514 **ONE HART** 8 (C) G Tuer 6-9-8 **S James**
5 (5) -0114 **ASTROPHYSICS** 11 (CD) A Carroll 11-9-8 **D Costello**
6 (8) 62-04 **SIR BENEDICT** 25 (D) Mrs Stella Barclay 5-9-7 **S Gray**
7 (9) 5-410 **SPANISH ANGEL** 42 (BF,C,D) R Carr 6-9-7 **Joanna Mason**
8 (7) 00-05 **NORDIC GLORY** 16 (D) M Attwater 4-9-5 **W Carson**
9 (11) 00-60 **JOSIES KID** 20 (D) Alice Haynes 4-9-5 **K O'Neill**
10 (6) 3321- **GUSTAV GRAVES** 192 (H,C,D) D Shaw 5-9-4 **D Keenan**
11 (2) 0060- **RED WALLS** 94 (CD) L Williamson 5-9-3 **J F Egan**

7-2 One Hart, 5-1 Gustav Graves, 6-1 Astrophysics, 7-1 Sir Benedict, 8-1 Spanish Angel, Lynns Boy, 10-1 Araifjan, 12-1 Frisky.

8.00 Handicap (£4,292: 7f) (12)
1 (4) -0200 **DIVINE CONNECTION** 8 (B,CD) Craig Lidster 6-9-10 **S James**
2 (1) 0-152 **DREAMS DELIVERED** 7 (BF,D) M Appleby 5-9-9 **L Morris**
3 (6) 21252 **WRITTEN BROADCAST** 8 (B,D) O Pears 6-9-8 **D Probert**
4 (5) -2600 **WRATH OF HECTOR** 17 (CD) Jessica Macey 6-9-6 **L Catton (5)**
5 (9) 01330 **WON LOVE** 16 (T,CD) M Loughnane 5-9-5 **M Ghiani**
6 (10) 50120 **NON MOLLARE** 8 (P) D Bourke 6-9-5 **P J McDonald**
7 (7) 00025 **BRAZEN ARROW** 8 (B,C) C Dunnett 5-9-2 **K O'Neill**
8 (11) 32343 **FACT OR FABLE** 14 (P,CD) J S Moore 6-9-2 **A Keeley (5)**
9 (8) -0002 **GOOD HUMOR** 7 (H,T,BF,D) J Butler 6-9-2 **D Keenan**
10 (12) 6006- **OKAIDI** 102 A Carroll 6-9-1 **J Fisher (5)**
11 (3) 0-440 **KASWARAH** 15 (H) J G O'Shea 5-9-0 **Gina Mangan (5)**
12 (2) -0500 **LANCASHIRE LIFE** 33 Mrs Stella Barclay 5-9-0 **C Shepherd**

11-4 Dreams Delivered, 4-1 Good Humor, 6-1 Written Broadcast, 8-1 Non Mollare, Fact Or Fable, 10-1 Brazen Arrow, Won Love, 16-1 others.

8.30 Handicap (£6,281: 1m 1f 104yd) (11)
1 (2) 4-151 **ARCADIAN NIGHTS** 20 (CD) M Loughnane 5-9-11 **A Keeley (5)**
2 (9) 40-16 **MILLTOWN STAR** 55 (C) J Osborne 6-9-11 **S Osborne**
3 (11) 01201 **POETIC FORCE** 9 (CD) A Carroll 9-9-11 **Mollie Phillips (3)**
4 (8) 44-05 **ENOUGH ALREADY** 28 L Carter 7-9-10 **J Haynes**
5 (4) 23-00 **BABY STEPS** 21 (P,CD) D Loughnane 7-9-8 **Rossa Ryan**
6 (5) 1-500 **TIGER BEETLE** 16 (T,CD) M Rimell 5-9-8 **D Probert**
7 (6) 21225 **JOHNNY BOOM** 11 (P,BF,CD) S Lycett 5-9-7 **C Lee**
8 (7) 5-026 **HARBOUR VISION** 7 (V,CD) S Dixon 8-9-5 **Elisha Whittington (5)**
9 (10) 65460 **MAFIA POWER** 36 (B,CD) A Watson 6-9-4 **T Fisher (5)**
10 (3) 26-05 **ENGLISH SPIRIT** 24 (CD) H Main 5-9-3 **J Bryan**
11 (1) 4264/ **CAPTAIN ATTRIDGE** 532 Henry Oliver 5-9-2 **L Morris**

9-4 Arcadian Nights, 4-1 Poetic Force, 11-2 Johnny Boom, 6-1 Milltown Star, 12-1 Harbour Vision, English Spirit, 16-1 others.

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TOM MAHER/INPHO/SHUTTERSTOCK



Mia and Georgia, and wife, Heather



Standing at 6ft 4ins, Andrews makes his way out for the final race of the day

as much on another day charged with unusual emotion. "The amount of people who have been supporting us has been amazing," he said. "It helps."

The whole De Bromhead family is wrapped in racing. Earlier, Envoi Allen had produced a finish that was so electric it might have drained the National Grid in the Ryanair Chase and Jack's twin, Mia, and younger sister, Georgia, had been there to greet the horse in the winners' enclosure. It was nice to see their smiles. Blackmore dismounted and drew them into her arms like the favourite aunt that she is.

It is a private tragedy made public this week, but it has been nice to feel the kindness of strangers. De Bromhead explained why this stuff matters at the funeral on a rainy day in Butlerstown. Around 15,000 people watched online as De Bromhead admitted he had questioned himself, but his father raced and trained, and it is the sap of the family tree. The advice he had given in his eulogy was a message for all. "Tell those you love them while you can," he said. Mia added: "I got so lucky you were born with me."

The Boy, the Mole, the Fox and the Horse is a bestselling book full of ink drawings and poignant aphorisms. At one point the horse tells the boy: "Sometimes just getting up and carrying on is brave and magnificent."

It was a line that resonated as you looked at De Bromhead, his wife, their girls, and the horse in the winners' enclosure. Racing sometimes gets mocked for being an insular world. It's misrepresented as being the preserve of toffs in tweed and drunks in troughs. But a tight world can also provide comforting bonds. Sporting triumphs scarcely make a major difference to the suffering of bereaved parents and siblings, but it is also true that this year's races have funnelled the emotion into an unforgettable tribute.

So this was for Jack, whose picture adorned a page in the racecard. Before his race, Mia and Georgia stood with a bunch of boys and looked at the horses. Twitter refrained from arguing to hope for a De Bromhead winner. As the horses headed from the ring to the course, the father walked past a large image of his son on an oversized screen and went down to the day job. Magical Zoe came in second, but was well beaten by You Wear It Well. For owner Sir Chips Keswick it was a first as he had missed the triumph of his previous winner in 2014 because he was busy watching Arsenal lose to Bayern Munich in his then role as club chairman. "If Arsenal win the league after having a winner at the Cheltenham Festival that might just be an overflowing cup," he said.

Keswick is 83 now. "I don't know if I can get up that step," he said when called to receive his trophy. De Bromhead was also a tad reluctant to step up to the podium. "Let the kids do it," he said when asked to make the presentations. He gave in and he and his wife, Heather, stood either side of the owner, assorted children and Jamie Snowden, the trainer who made a beeline for De Bromhead with a bear hug. Gavin Sheehan, the jockey, accepted his trophy from Mia. "It was just poetry in motion," he said.

It has been a draining week for the family. There have been the wins but the trainer said: "The fairytale results don't always come true."

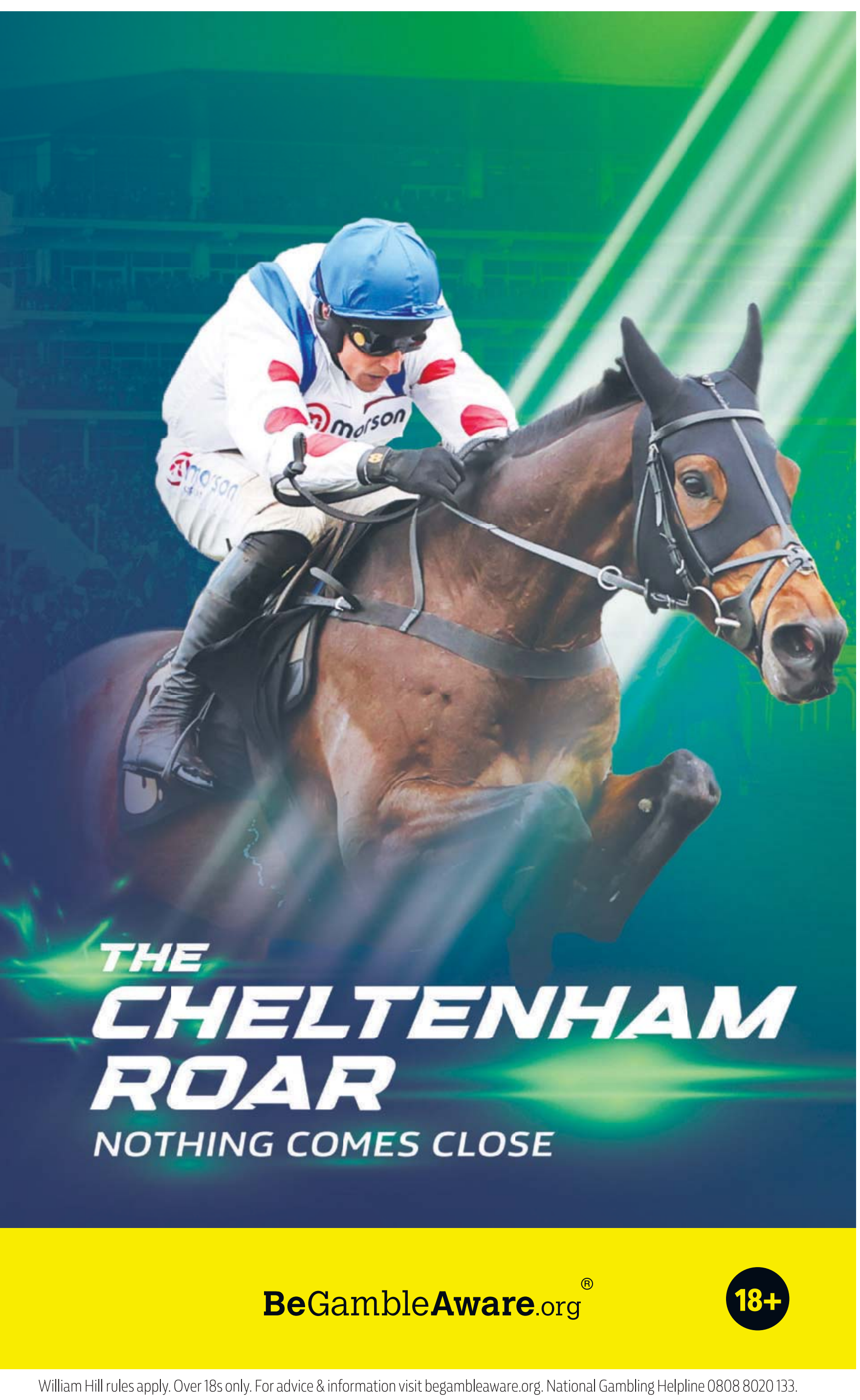
It was a sentiment shared by most. In the last race, the Kim Muir Amateur Jockeys' Handicap Chase, the 6ft 4ins rider Jack Andrews — said to be the tallest jockey in the world — was on Anightinlambourn.

Long jockey, long name, it was a long shot and they pulled up in a race won by Angels Dawn.

So one more day to go with De Bromhead's A Plus Tard, and Blackmore, defending the Gold Cup, roared on by an army of well-wishers hoping he is wrong about the fairytales.

FESTIVAL SUCCESS AT LAST FOR NICHOLLS

Stage Star ended a three-year drought for Paul Nicholls at the Festival with victory in the Turners Novices' Chase. It was the champion trainer's 47th success at the Festival, but his frist since Politologue won the Champion Chase in 2020.



Doncaster

Rob Wright

1.20 Henry's Friend
2.00 Big Changes
2.40 Flirtatious Girl
3.15 Striking Out
4.00 Horacio Apple's
4.40 Couldbeaweapon
5.15 It's Tuesday

Going: good, good to soft in places

Sky Sports Racing

1.20 Novices' Hurdle (£4,901: 2m 3f) (8)

1 1-11P **MOON HUNTER** 62 (CD) H Daly 6-11-12 **M G Nolan**
2 1324 **HENRY'S FRIEND** 69 (T,BF) B Pauling 6-11-7 **K Brogan**
3 **ERNEST LORING** F579 (T) J Larkin (Ire) 5-11-0 **D E Browne (7)**
4 0 **FROMPOSTTOPILLAR** 46 (H,T) T R Gretton 5-11-0 **R T Dunne**
5 06P **HEY MISTER DJ** 21 A Ralph 5-11-0 **A Edwards (3)**
6 4-243 **IDEALDES VILLERETS** 21 M Rowley 5-11-0 **B Hughes**
7 P-0 **IMPORT EXPORT** 48 (T) O Greenall & J Guerriero 5-11-0 **H Brooke**
8 006 **BEAR A HAND** 78 R J Price 6-10-7 **Sean Houlihan**

11-8 Idealdes Villerets, 13-8 Henry's Friend, 9-4 Moon Hunter, 50-1 Ernest Loring, 66-1 Hey Mister Dj, 100-1 others.

2.00 Handicap Chase (£5,175: 3m) (8)

1 3211P **POST CHAISE** 25 (BF,D) O Greenall & J Guerriero 6-12-0 **Toby Wynne (5)**
2 12133 **GET WITH IT** 102 (T,D) R Dobbin 8-12-0 **Craig Nichol**
3 13541 **BIG CHANGES** 17 (T,D) L Morgan 6-11-12 **L Dobb (7)**
4 -0032 **WHERE'S HECTOR** 18 (H,BF) M & D Easterby 6-11-11 **C O'Farrell**
5 044-5 **WILDFIRE WARRIOR** 45 P Hobbs & J White 8-11-11 **Sean Houlihan**
6 56254 **MANCE RAYDER** 17 (B,CD) H Hogarth 10-11-9 **B Hughes**
7 25222 **ELLEON** 24 (T,BF) S England 8-10-8 **J England**
8 PPP03 **LOUGH SALT** 36 (P,CD) P Winks 12-10-2 **J Kington**

11-4 Post Chaise, 7-2 Big Changes, 5-1 Where's Hector, 6-1 Elleon, 7-1 Get With It, 10-1 Wildfire Warrior, Mance Rayder, 14-1 Lough Salt.

2.40 Maiden Hurdle (£4,753: 2m 1f) (13)

1 /46-5 **FLIRTATIOUS GIRL** 122 (W,T,BF) K Bailey 7-11-2 **R T Dunne**
2 66F **HAPPY INDEX** 87 (P) P Webber 5-11-2 **R Dingle**
3 5 **LA PAGERIE** 86 N Mulholland 6-11-2 **D McMenamin**
4 60/ **MRS JONES** 824 Mrs T Barfoot-Saunt 7-11-2 **Mr G Barfoot-Saunt**
5 P065 **RHYME SCHEME** 14 (T) P Winks 6-11-2 **J Kington**
6 5-524 **ROSE OF SIENA** 111 N Richards 6-11-2 **B Hughes**
7 1252 **SHELIKESTHELIGHTS** 24 (T) F O'Brien 5-11-2 **P Brennan**
8 **GOLDEN GLANCE** F186 O Greenall & J Guerriero 4-10-6 **H Brooke**
9 46 **LADY HAMILTON** 13 W Storey 4-10-6 **R Chapman**
10 **NOONIE** F175 (W) P Kirby 4-10-6 **T Dowson**
11 **PENUMBRA** F583 Mrs Stella Barclay 4-10-6 **Craig Nichol**
12 65 **RENDITION** F28 S Edmunds 4-10-6 **J Tudor**
13 25 **VIRTUOSO** 17 (P) D McCain 4-10-6 **P J Kavanagh (5)**

9-4 Rose Of Siena, 5-2 Shelikesthelights, 9-2 Flirtatious Girl, 8-1 Rhyme Scheme, 10-1 Golden Glance, 12-1 Virtuoso, 14-1 La Pagerie, 20-1 others.

3.15 Handicap Chase (£10,562: 2m 4f 115yd) (8)

1 21344 **GRAND VOYAGE** 44 (D) W Coltherd 7-12-1 **S Coltherd**
2 -5P56 **PAT'S PICK** 243 (P) L Morgan 9-12-0 **B Hughes**
3 12-4F **PETTY CASH** 111 (BF) H Daly 6-11-10 **M G Nolan**
4 2-331 **SON OF THE SOMME** 63 (P,D) B Ellison 8-11-10 **H Brooke**
5 -3534 **DREAMING BLUE** 32 (T) A Honeyball 6-11-6 **R Dingle**
6 -3622 **STRIKING OUT** 40 (BF) Henry Oliver 9-11-1 **D Noonan**
7 10320 **MACAVITY** 49 J O'Keeffe 5-11-1 **Craig Nichol**
8 36P04 **SAINTE DOCTOR** 37 (T) N Mulholland 7-10-12 **K Brogan**

3-1 Petty Cash, 7-2 Son Of The Somme, 4-1 Striking Out, 5-1 Grand Voyage, 10-1 Sainte Doctor, Dreaming Blue, 12-1 Pat's Pick, 14-1 Macavity.

4.00 Handicap Hurdle (£5,915: 3m) (5)

1 32121 **ARMCHAIR FARMER** 7 (T) F O'Brien 7-12-0(7ex) **P Brennan**
2 -3311 **HORACIO APPLE'S** 35 O Greenall & J Guerriero 6-11-11 **H Brooke**
3 2-611 **MISS MILANO** 113 N Richards 8-11-9 **C Rabbitt (7)**
4 1000 **TWOCONDUIT** 34 J P Ryan (Ire) 6-11-4 **B Hughes**
5 23F05 **GRAND DU NORD** 62 M Hammond 7-11-2 **C O'Farrell**

13-8 Armchair Farmer, 5-2 Horacio Apple's, 3-1 Miss Milano, 7-1 Twoconduit, 12-1 Grand Du Nord.

4.40 Handicap Hurdle (£5,915: 2m 3f) (11)

1 22-P0 **HASTY BROOK** 62 (T) R Menzies 6-12-1 **N Moscrop**
2 U5006 **DR SANDERSON** 47 B Haslam 9-11-12 **K Brogan**
3 -0410 **NO TACKLE** 53 (D) S Drinkwater 6-11-11 **R T Dunne**
4 021-0 **FINGAL'S HILL** 25 P Atkinson 7-11-9 **T Dowson**
5 21322 **COULDBEAWEAPON** 77 (P,BF) B Pauling 6-11-8 **Beau Morgan (7)**
6 6-44U **GREAT OCEAN** 32 (P,T,BF) N Mulholland 7-11-6 **D McMenamin**
7 35-44 **PERRYVILLE** 273 M Rowley 6-11-5 **A Edwards (3)**
8 -2150 **SUPREME YEATS** 43 (T,V) L Morgan 7-11-4 **B Hughes**
9 -P052 **HEROS** 23 V Williams 6-11-4 **Shane Quinlan (3)**
10 0/3-2 **SATURDAY SONG** 48 A King 7-11-3 **A Thorne (5)**
11 25-53 **ROYLE STEEL** 32 M Hammond 5-11-2 **Emma Smith-Chaston (3)**

3-1 Saturday Song, 4-1 Couldbeaweapon, 7-1 Great Ocean, 8-1 Heros, 10-1 Supreme Yeats, Hasty Brook, 12-1 others.

5.15 Open Maiden NH Flat Race (£2,535: 2m 1f) (10)

1 5 **DESTROYTHEEVIDENCE** 63 K Bailey 5-11-5 **R T Dunne**
2 23 **EASTER JUNCTION** 73 D McCain 5-11-5 **B Hughes**
3 **IT'S TUESDAY** (W,T) F O'Brien 5-11-5 **P Brennan**
4 6 **JOHNTHEPOSTMAN** 299 Mrs T Barfoot-Saunt 5-11-5 **Mr G Barfoot-Saunt**
5 2 **LUCKIE SEVEN** 66 N Richards 5-11-5 **D McMenamin**
6 24 **NOT BAD ARE YOU** 47 (T,BF) N Twiston-Davies 6-11-5 **F Lambert (5)**
7 **ZOLPHARINE** J P Ryan (Ire) 5-11-5 **J Hogan (5)**
8 05 **CRYSTAL MER** 75 P Webber 4-10-9 **R Dingle**
9 0 **THE OLD BULL** 132 (T) T R Gretton 4-10-9 **L Edwards**
10 **WHISKY WOLF** T Easterby 4-10-9 **J Hamilton**

11-4 Easter Junction, 4-1 Luckie Seven, 9-2 It's Tuesday, 11-2 Crystal Mer, 7-1 Destroytheevidence, Not Bad Are You, 14-1 Whisky Wolf, 20-1 Zolpharine.

Newcastle

Rob Wright

5.05 Rock Chant
5.45 Ri Na Farraige
6.15 Carbis Bay
6.45 Tropez Power
7.15 Elisheva
7.45 Venturous
8.15 Seagrave Fox

Going: standard

Sky Sports Racing

Draw: no advantage

5.05 Handicap (£4,187: 2m) (9)

1 (6) -0211 **ROCK CHANT** 4 (P,T,D) I Williams 5-10-7(10ex) **B Sanderson (3)**
2 (1) 450/4 **BOUNDSY BOY** J22 (P,T) O Greenall & J Guerriero 5-9-10 **D Muscutt**
3 (7) 5-432 **FORGETMENOTBLUE** 8 (B) K R Burke 4-9-7 **P-L Jamin (3)**
4 (8) 0005- **GOLD RING** 192 (W) N Mechie 6-9-4 **A Breslin (3)**
5 (2) 3-060 **MASTER OLIVER** 17 (V) I Jardine 4-9-3 **A Mullen**
6 (3) 0/5-2 **KISS MY FACE** J17 (V) B Ellison 6-9-1 **B Robinson**
7 (5) 500-5 **ZEPHLYN** 23 Ewan Whillans 4-9-1 **G Lee**
8 (4) 030-0 **SUGARPIEHONEYBUNCH** 64 (P) S G West 5-9-0 **A Brookes (5)**
9 (9) 50240 **STEEL HELMET** 8 (CD) H Bethell 9-9-0 **C Hardie**

13-8 Rock Chant, 3-1 Kiss My Face, 9-2 Boundsy Boy, 5-1 Forgetmenotblue, 16-1 Steel Helmet, 20-1 Master Oliver, 25-1 others.

5.45 Handicap (£5,129: 1m 2f) (8)

1 (6) 3-505 **POWER OF STATES** 15 (T,V,D) M Appleby 7-9-10 **B Curtis**
2 (3) 0633- **JEAN BAPTISTE** 151 (D) R Fell 6-9-8 **D Allan**
3 (7) 33414 **DREAM HARDER** 7 (BF,CD) I Williams 4-9-8 **C Planas**
4 (8) 1-012 **QAASID** 22 (V,BF,CD) J Camacho 5-9-7 **G Lee**
5 (4) 414-6 **FIRST IMPRESSION** J32 (D) J J Quinn 6-9-7 **J Hart**
6 (5) 12- **ESTIDAMA** 100 W Haggas 4-9-2 **D Muscutt**
7 (2) 3134- **INNSE GALL** 172 (D) I Jardine 5-9-2 **A Mullen**
8 (1) 3-031 **RI NA FARRAIGE** 23 (CD) R Fahey 6-8-11 **Oisin Orr**

15-8 Estidama, 4-1 Ri Na Farraige, 9-2 Qaasid, 6-1 Dream Harder, 10-1 First Impression, 12-1 Innse Gall, 14-1 Power Of States, Jean Baptiste.

6.15 Maiden Stakes (£5,234: 1m) (10)

1 (4) 0 **CLEAR WHITE LIGHT** 2 A Keatley 7-10-2 **Ryan Sexton**
2 (1) **ROMAN BLAZE** J153 (H) J Bedi 4-10-2 **Paula Muir**
3 (6) **YAANAAS** R Varian 4-10-2 **J Crowley**
4 (3) 5 **SWING TO THE STARS** 15 I Williams 4-9-11 **P Mulrennan**
5 (10) **BROCKLESBY** M Dods 3-8-13 **C Beasley**
6 (7) 2 **CARBIS BAY** 25 M Botti 3-8-13 **A Atzeni**
7 (2) **FLYING FRONTIER** J Tate 3-8-13 **C Rodriguez**
8 (9) **MILITARY TYCOON** H Palmer 3-8-13 **B Curtis**
9 (8) 2-2 **ROARING LEGEND** 45 (BF) J Ferguson 3-8-13 **D Muscutt**
10 (5) **BEECHWOOD ISABELLE** D C Griffiths 3-8-8 **D Fentiman**

13-8 Roaring Legend, 11-4 Yaanaas, 9-2 Carbis Bay, 8-1 Flying Frontier, 12-1 Swing To The Stars, Military Tycoon, 20-1 others.

6.45 Handicap (£8,640: 1m) (11)

1 (11) 1-321 **TROPEZ POWER** 17 (D) J J Quinn 4-9-10 **J Hart**
2 (6) 3110- **POINT LYNAS** 187 (H,D) E Bethell 4-9-9 **C Rodriguez**
3 (10) 4230- **ARTHUR'S REALM** 161 (D) E Dunlop 5-9-9 **Oisin Orr**
4 (2) 2520- **AL MARMAR** 168 (D) A Balding 4-9-9 **A Atzeni**
5 (1) 5645- **SCOTTISH SUMMIT** 200 (CD) G Harker 10-9-8 **T Hamilton**
6 (5) 2400- **SPINAROUND** 155 (D) K P De Foy 4-9-8 **D Muscutt**
7 (8) 1050- **FANTASY BELIEVER** 168 (D) E Walker 6-9-6 **K Shoemark**
8 (3) 00-50 **POWER OF DARKNESS** 6 (D) C Fellowes 8-9-5 **B Curtis**
9 (7) 6140- **DREAM SHOW** 218 A Brittain 4-9-4 **C Hardie**
10 (9) 4113- **HARSWELL DUKE** 142 (BF,D) R Fell 5-9-2 **D Allan**
11 (4) 32062 **STARSHIBA** 15 (V,D) D O'Meara 6-8-12 **B Robinson**

2-1 Tropez Power, 11-2 Starshiba, 7-1 Al Marmar, 8-1 Arthur's Realm, Harswell Duke, 10-1 Fantasy Believer, Point Lynas, 16-1 others.

Course specialists

Cheltenham: Trainers P Neville, 3 winners from 6 runners, 50.0%; C Byrnes, 3 from 13, 23.1%. **Jockeys** D R Fox, 4 winners from 12 rides, 33.3%.

Doncaster: Trainers N Mulholland, 11 from 46, 23.9%; K Bailey, 6 from 26, 23.1%. **Jockeys** F Lambert, 3 from 5, 60.0%.

Fakenham: Trainers A Watson, 3 from 6, 50.0%; P Nicholls, 6 from 18, 33.3%. **Jockeys** Isabel Williams, 3 from 7, 42.9%.

Newcastle: Trainers W Haggas, 39 from 133, 29.3%; J Ferguson, 5 from 20, 25.0%. **Jockeys** J Crowley, 11 from 38, 28.9%.

Wolverhampton: Trainers J Parr, 12 from 66, 18.2%; M Rimell, 3 from 17, 17.6%. **Jockeys** K Stott, 28 from 127, 22.0%.

7.15 Classified Stakes (£3,768: 6f) (9)

1 (1) 33412 **ELISHEVA** 8 (P,D) D O'Meara 5-9-2 **Mark Winn (5)**
2 (2) R00-0 **HANDS DOWN** 2 (B,D) C Moore (Ire) 6-9-2 **Brandon Wilkie (7)**
3 (9) 34-00 **HURT YOU NEVER** 31 (D) Adrian Nicholls 4-9-2 **Laura Coughlan (5)**
4 (4) 16523 **JKR COBBLER** 8 (H,CD) I Jardine 4-9-2 **A Mullen**
5 (6) -2351 **KRAKEN FLORIDA** 25 (B,CD) J Wainwright 4-9-2 **P Mulrennan**
6 (8) 06600 **MUATADEL** 33 (V,CD) J Wainwright 10-9-2 **Z Wheatley (5)**
7 (5) 36430 **MUTABAAHY** 11 (P,C,D) A Brittain 8-9-2 **C Hardie**
8 (3) 0506- **MUTANAASEQ** 177 (B,D) R Carr 8-9-2 **JP Sullivan**
9 (7) 0-024 **ZEGOS SURPRISE** 25 (T,BF) I Jardine 5-9-2 **Poppy Wilson (7)**

9-4 Elisheva, 4-1 Kraken Florida, 9-2 Jkr Cobbler, 5-1 Zegos Surprise, 8-1 Mutanaaseq, 10-1 Mutabaahy, 16-1 Hurt You Never, 25-1 others.

7.45 Handicap (£8,374: 5f) (9)

1 (6) 1604- **BERGERAC** 148 (BF,D) K Ryan 5-9-11 **Louise Akehurst (7)**
2 (5) 45-62 **VENTUROUS** 23 (CD) D & N Barron 10-9-9 **B Curtis**
3 (4) 3-016 **MAY SONIC** 23 (D) C Hills 7-9-8 **K Shoemark**
4 (7) 1-504 **THE BELL CONDUCTOR** 23 (CD) P Midgley 6-9-6 **P Mulrennan**
5 (8) 064-1 **BADRI** 23 (CD) R Carr 6-9-4 **L Edmunds**
6 (2) 0624- **NELSON GAY** 169 (BF,D) M Dods 5-8-10 **C Beasley**
7 (1) 3-231 **POCKLEY** 15 (B,CD) Miss L Perratt 5-8-6 **A Atzeni**
8 (3) 4661- **WATER OF LEITH** 150 (C,D) J Goldie 5-8-4 **Amie Waugh (5)**
9 (9) 061-2 **DANDY DINMONT** 15 (CD) N Tinkler 4-8-4 **F McManoman**

4-1 Pockley, 9-2 Venturous, Badri, 7-1 Bergerac, The Bell Conductor, 8-1 Dandy Dinmont, 10-1 Water Of Leith, Nelson Gay, 12-1 May Sonic.

8.15 Handicap (3-Y-O: £4,187: 7f) (7)

1 (1) -1215 **ABBEY'S DREAM** 30 (BF,CD) A Watson 9-11 **Mark Winn**
2 (5) 06-53 **ENGELBERT** 36 (T) J Ferguson 9-11 **D Muscutt**
3 (3) 4-311 **SEAGRAVE FOX** 24 (D) T Easterby 9-6 **D Allan**
4 (7) 006 **PUB CLUB** 23 H Palmer 9-5 **B Curtis**
5 (6) 305- **THE MUFFIN MAN** 227 Jessica Macey 9-3 **L Edmunds**
6 (4) 5-121 **MAGICDOLLAR** 27 (C) K Ryan 9-2 **T Eaves**
7 (2) 0066- **MY ROXANNE** 122 B Ellison 8-12 **B Robinson**

5-2 Magicdollar, 11-4 Seagrave Fox, 4-1 Engelbert, 5-1 Abbey's Dream, 7-1 Pub Club, 16-1 The Muffin Man, 25-1 My Roxanne.

MICHAEL STEELE/GETTY IMAGES



Envoi Allen and Blackmore leave Shishkin trailing as they win the Ryanair Chase at the Festival yesterday

Class, courage, guts and power – this was Blackmore in her pomp

Brough Scott watches the champion rider thrill spectators again as she hurls Envoi Allen to victory at Cheltenham

Sometimes races can transcend to something beyond the bounds of sport, something better. That's what happened when Envoi Allen took the Ryanair Chase for Rachael Blackmore and trainer Henry de Bromhead yesterday.

There was excitement in the preliminaries and plenty of drama in the race, but what happened afterwards was what really counted. This was the race in which Shishkin was set to return to the heights he had reached when starring at both the 2020 and 2021 Festivals before flopping behind Energumene last year.

He looked fit and hard enough when led round in the drizzle by Jaydon Lee, who was still smiling at the memory of his other horse Constitution Hill's stunning Champion Hurdle triumph on Tuesday. Blue Lord and jockey Paul Townend led a three-pronged entry from the Willie Mullins camp, while Harry Cobden hacked away on Hitman, still brimming with confidence from his earlier success on Stage Star. And then the enigma that is Envoi Allen.

In his early career, Envoi Allen went 12 races unbeaten until crashing out here two years ago. An attempt at the two-mile chasing championship didn't quite work last season and while this one started grandly at Down Royal, it sunk to ignominious defeat at Kempton Park on Boxing Day.

We had not seen Envoi Allen since, although he was certainly keen enough beforehand yesterday, with Blackmore having to circle him before the start to prevent him from charging away. But at least his mind was ready at the flag fall. The same, however, could not be said for Shishkin.

This was one of those races when rhythm was everything. Blackmore had a horse she could immediately place in pole position outside the leader, with room to jump and all tactics possible.

Nico de Boinville had a very different deal on Shishkin. Despite being a former two-mile star, the evens favourite now always seemed in a hustle over this extended 2½-mile trip.

After half a mile, you could see De Boinville's elbows moving as he tried to improve his position. Coming to the stands on the first circuit, he pushed forward to try to draw some response from this aggression. But Shishkin still looked hurried and snatched at his fences. De Boinville had to opt for patience and hope for a supercharge to kick in later on.

Up front, Chacun Pour Soi was looking like the monster he once promised to be. French Dynamite was providing a bit of companionship up front, but Blackmore and Envoi Allen always looked to have them covered on the outside, with Cobden and Hitman still spinning sweetly along on the inner. Swinging down the hill, Fury Road and Blue Lord got into the increasingly hectic argument, and just as Shishkin at last began to close, he galloped slap into the third fence from home.

It was a the sort of blunder that sends a horse into a somersault and jockeys into orbit. Somehow Shishkin stayed upright and only a piece of prehensile, stirrup-clamped horsemanship kept De Boinville in the saddle.

Shishkin's chance was surely spent. Chacun Pour Soi and French Dynamite duelled for the lead with Envoi Allen outside them, with Hitman still there and Blue Lord a possibility.

French Dynamite was level at the second last, but coming to the final fence here was Blackmore in her pomp, a force very much of mind as of matter. She had both her hands on the reins as she hurled Envoi Allen down towards us, the whip slapping on the horse's shoulder with urgency in those last three strides for take-off.

Cobden got a soaring leap out of Hitman to go second, but this was all Blackmore and Envoi Allen now, with the only surprise in how Shishkin finally caught wind to push Hitman out of second and make one wonder if next year's Cheltenham Gold Cup would be his better target.

Envoi Allen has starred at two previous Festivals, while Blackmore and De Bromhead have already gone into Champion Hurdle and Cheltenham Gold Cup legend, and furthered it with Honeysuckle's farewell on Tuesday. But this latest bravura piece of training and riding had the difference of 13-year-old Jack de Bromhead's tragic death last September, and afterwards it showed.

As Blackmore stood with the huge silver Ryanair Trophy and Jack's sisters, Mia and Georgia, beside her, De Bromhead paid a tears-in-the-eyes tribute to his rider. "On the Sunday morning," he said, "probably 12 hours after Jack had died, I met my assistant Davy Roche in the yard. It was eight o'clock in the morning and this girl came out of one of the stables. Rachael lives an hour away from us, but it was her.

"She is amazing with the girls. She takes them off go-karting and does all sorts of things with them, the three of them and Zoe Smalley, who does all our travelling, and are very competitive.

"Everyone has been amazing to us. We get so much support and Michael [O'Leary] has been amazing, putting on Jack's race [the sixth race at the Festival yesterday named in the youngster's honour] and giving us tickets."

De Bromhead added: "I keep looking for a rainbow but he's not around," before turning wistfully and saying, "There might be one just starting to come there now. This is a massive day for us, a day to celebrate his unfortunately very short life. The support we get is ridiculous. We're so lucky. There are so many people in our situation who don't see this support. We are extremely lucky."

Sometimes it is just sport. However, sometimes something sadder but, yes, better.

£85.1m

It was a day for long odds winners yesterday. If you had stuck £1 on the winner on the first race and successfully reinvested the profits on each winner for the rest of the day in an accumulator you would have ended up with £85.1m following winners at 15-2, 9-1, 13-2, 33-1, 20-1, 16-1 and 10-1. By comparison, the same accumulator on Wednesday would have earned a "mere" £150,000. In the unlikely event anyone had picked all seven winners yesterday, however, most bookmakers cap payouts at £1m

Yesterday's racing results

Cheltenham

Going: soft (good to soft in places)

1.30 (2m 3f 168yd ch) 1, **Stage Star** (H Cobden, 15-2); 2, Notlongtillmay (40-1); 3, Mighty Potter (4-6 fav). 7 ran. NR: Banbridge, Christopher Wood. 3¼l, ¾l. P F Nicholls.

2.10 (2m 7f 213yd hdle) 1, **Good Time Jonny** (Liam McKenna, 9-1); 2, Salvador Ziggy (10-1); 3, Mill Green (22-1). 23 ran. NR: Jet Of Magic. 3¼l, nk. A J Martin.

2.50 (2m 4f 127yd ch) 1, **Envoi Allen** (Rachael Blackmore, 13-2); 2, Shishkin (Evens fav); 3, Hitman (22-1). 9 ran. 2¾l, nk. H De Bromhead.

3.30 (2m 7f 213yd hdle) 1, **Sire Du Berlais** (M P Walsh, 33-1); 2, Teahupoo (9-4 fav); 3, Dashel Drasher (40-1). 11 ran. ns, ¾l. G Elliott.

4.10 (2m 4f 127yd ch) 1, **Seddon** (Ben Harvey, 20-1); 2, Fugitif (11-1); 3, Shakem Up'arry (16-1). 23 ran. NR: Captain Tom Cat. 2l, 3¼l. J C McConnell.

4.50 (2m 179yd hdle) 1, **You Wear It Well** (G Sheehan, 16-1); 2, Magical Zoe (15-2); 3, Halka Du Tabert (12-1). 21 ran. 2¾l, hd. Jamie Snowden.

5.30 (3m 2f ch) 1, **Angels Dawn** (Mr P A King, 10-1); 2, Stumptown (7-2 fav); 3, Mr Incredible (4-1). 23 ran. NR: Captain Cattistock, Chambard, One More Fleurie. Nk, 5½l. S Curling.

Placepot: £14,087.30. Quadpot: £209.90.

Chelmsford

Going: standard

6.00 (6f) 1, **Shalaa Asker** (Mr Eireann Cagney, 9-4 jt-fav); 2, Thismydream (16-5); 3, Lilkian (9-4 jt-fav). 7 ran. NR: Hit Mac. ¾l, ¾l. A Keatley.

6.30 (7f) 1, **Creme De Cacao** (David Egan, 7-1); 2, Risotto (6-1); 3, Flame Of Kodiac (100-30). 11 ran. 2¼l, nk. R Varian.

7.00 (1m 2f) 1, **Zealot** (Billy Loughnane, 10-11 fav); 2, Diderot (9-2); 3, Gloucestershire (11-2). 6 ran. ¾l, nk. M Appleby.

7.30 (6f) 1, **Kessaar Power** (J F Egan, 11-4 fav); 2, Rossmore Nation (9-2); 3, Wadi Bani (7-1). 8 ran. NR: Tallulah Myla. 1½l, sh hd. K P De Foy.

8.00 (1m) 1, **Get Stuck In** (Andrea Atzeni, 9-4); 2, Seductive Power (100-30); 3, Dawn Vega (7-4 fav). 5 ran. ¾l, 2½l. Charlie Johnston.

8.30 (5f) 1, **Angle Land** (Daniel Muscutt, 4-1); 2, Crimson Sand (3-1 fav); 3, Bezzas Lad (5-1). 8 ran. 1½l, hd. R M H Cowell.

Placepot: £33.20
Quadpot: £6.00.

Hexham

Going: heavy (soft in places)

1.50 (2m 48yd hdle) 1, **Miss Lamb** (Billy Garritty, Evens fav); 2, Ninetofive (4-1); 3, Fetch It Yourself (50-1). 13 ran. NR: Caithness. ¾l, 11l. Jedd O'Keeffe.

2.30 (3m 41yd ch) 1, **Kildrum** (Emma Smith-Chaston, 10-1); 2, Gipsy Lee Rose (15-2); 3, Broomfields Kan (9-1). 13 ran. 25l, 8l. Micky Hammond.

3.10 (2m 4f 28yd hdle) 1, **Fly By Milan** (Danny McMenamin, 10-1); 2, Had To Be Hugo (100-30); 3, Vandemere (Evens fav). 9 ran. NR: Hell On Earth. 1¾l, ¾l. N G Richards.

3.50 (3m 7f 199yd ch) 1, **Prince Dundee** (P W Wadge, 13-2); 2, Glittering Love (11-1); 3, Event Of Sivola (5-1). 7 ran. NR: Strong Economy. Hd, 5l. Miss Lucinda V Russell.

4.30 (2m 7f 63yd hdle) 1, **Lissen To The Lady** (Miss J Walton, 20-1); 2, Piaff Bubbles (4-1 fav); 3, Pipers Cross (16-1). 15 ran. Nk, 3½l. Miss S E Forster.

5.10 (2m 4f 15yd ch) 1, **Ex S'elance** (T Dowson, 11-2); 2, Trevelyn's Corn (9-1); 3, Tom Creen (4-1 jt-fav). 11 ran. NR: Azof Des Mottes, The Electrician. 4¼l, 2¾l. V Thompson.

Placepot: £189.80. Quadpot: £23.10.

Southwell

Going: standard

5.05 (1m 3f 23yd) 1, **Habanero Star** (Taylor Fisher, 14-1); 2, Bristol Hill (4-7 fav); 3, Morani Kali (11-2). 7 ran. NR: Sicario. 1½l, hd. Miss Gay Kelleway.

5.40 (7f 14yd) 1, **Tom Tulliver** (K T O'Neill, 4-1); 2, Thomas Equinas (100-30); 3, Martineo (11-5 fav). 10 ran. NR: Lord Cherry. ½l, ¾l. S Dixon.

6.10 (7f 14yd) 1, **Saisons D'Or** (J Garritty, 5-1); 2, Mabre (9-1); 3, Bobby Joe Leg (11-1). 9 ran. NR: Martin's Brig. Nk, 2¼l. Jedd O'Keeffe.

6.40 (6f 16yd) 1, **Yorkshire** (Callum Rodriguez, 13-8 fav); 2, Ferrous (4-1); 3, Sharp Power (3-1). 7 ran. ns, ¾l. E Bethell.

7.10 (6f 16yd) 1, **Embla** (Charlie Bennett, 16-5); 2, David's Gift (14-1); 3, Shining Crystal (Evens fav). 7 ran. NR: Kay Ceraar. ½l, ½l. A D Brown.

7.40 (1m 13yd) 1, **Sid's Annie** (L Morris, 3-1); 2, Mountain Queen (2-1 fav); 3, Valentinka (8-1). 5 ran. Nk, ¾l. M D I Usher.

8.10 (4f 214yd) 1, **Dapper Man** (Jason Hart, 8-1); 2, Freedom Flyer (9-1); 3, The Tron (7-2 fav). 11 ran. NR: Birdie Bowers, Khulu. 2¼l, nk. R Fell.

Placepot: £54.80. Quadpot: £34.50.*

FRIDAY MARCH 17 2023
THE TIMES

Bricks&Mortar



Why buy when you can rent?

ONE IN TEN OF THE RICHEST DON’T WANT TO OWN

pages 6-7

Home of the week

This Georgian house is on the site of Jane Austen's home — and where she dreamt up Mr Darcy and the Dashwood sisters



Steventon is a sleepy patch of Hampshire and the birthplace, in 1775, of one of England's most celebrated novelists, Jane Austen. The rector's daughter lived there for 25 years. She started writing the drafts that would become *Sense and Sensibility*, *Pride and Prejudice* and *Northanger Abbey* in the village, which is situated in a patchwork of undulating fields and trees seven miles west of Basingstoke.

One can imagine a bonneted Austen and her clutch of seven siblings lined up in the pews of St Nicholas, the 13th-century church where her father, George, was rector for 36 years — until he retired and relocated with Austen, her sister Cassandra and their mother to Bath in 1801. Her eldest brother, James, became the new vicar, until his death in 1819.

Sign up to our property newsletter for the latest analysis, gossip, tips and tricks every Monday at **thetimes.co.uk/newsletters**

Steventon rectory, the 16th-century home that Austen was born and brought up in, was pulled down in the 1820s (she had died in 1817) by her brother, Edward Austen Knight. In the early 19th century, Knight rebuilt Steventon House within the grounds of the old building. He lived there until 1855, when he sold it to the second Duke of Wellington. It remained in use as a rectory until 1930.

A 2011 excavation in the grounds unearthed the foundations of the original house, as well as blue willow-pattern plates that the family are thought to have used — but Austen's life was clearly not quite as glamorous as the Regency society she portrays in her novels. Speaking to the BBC in 2012, the dig's project director Debbie Charlton, of Archeo Briton, said: "[The plates] were from Jane Austen's time and show they were up there following fashions in china. They weren't well off. They … were very much part of the village life."

The grade II listed stuccoed property has six bedrooms in the main house, which has almost 7,000 sq ft of living space. On the ground floor there is a reception hall, an oak-panelled drawing room, and dining and sitting rooms, as well as a kitchen/diner with a large island. There is a study, larder, store, WC and utility room, and two wine cellars.

In addition to the main house the sale includes two-bedroom Clover Cottage and a brick coach house with a workshop, stalls and double garage.

About 50 acres of grounds include a lime tree, thought to have been planted by James Austen in 1813, and an old water pump presumed to be the one the Austens used. Elegant gardens feature cherry trees, a white wisteria walk and a rose garden, as well as a greenhouse and a kitchen garden.

Steventon House is on the market for the first time in 15 years. During their tenure the sellers, in their seventies, have kept sheep and horses, and have renovated and refurbished the property. They are "a good Hampshire family" who used to own an estate and are now downsizing, Ed Sugden, a director at Savills' country department, says.

Victoria Brzezinski

Steventon House is on the market for £8.5 million jointly with Savills and Knight Frank



RG25 The postcode in numbers

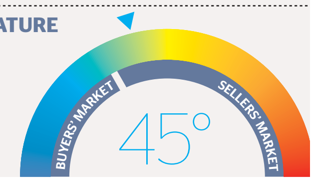
In this part of Hampshire 45% of properties for sale are under offer, falling to 44% of those costing £1 million or more

32% Decrease in buyer demand in the past year

£538,097 is the average house price

TAKING THE TEMPERATURE
SELLERS' MARKET

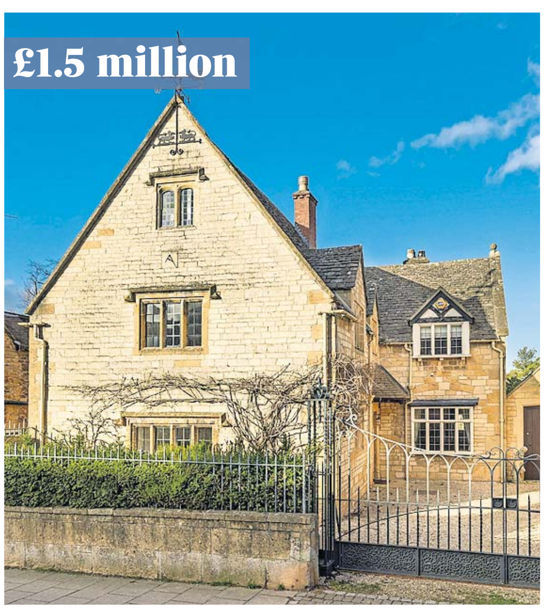
The hotter the market, the quicker and easier it should be to sell a home



What £1.5 million buys you in …

Compiled by Victoria Brzezinski @vbrzezin

Worcestershire



Tudor Cottage is on the High Street of Broadway, a village known as the "jewel of the Cotswolds" that is famous for its tearooms, antique shops and galleries. The grade II listed house, with oak panelling and stone fireplaces, has four bedrooms and two bathrooms (one an en suite shower room) upstairs, while downstairs there is a sitting room, study, dining room, kitchen and garden room. There is also a secluded back garden and off-street parking. Broadway has plenty of amenities including a large GP practice and two primary schools, rated good and outstanding by Ofsted.

EPC rating E (potential C) — on a scale of A (best) to G.
Upside The location: independent shops, restaurants and cafés nearby.
Downside The location: the village attracts a lot of tourists.
Contact jackson-stops.co.uk

Surrey



This detached house sits on a three-acre site in the open countryside near Horsham in West Sussex — it is also just a ten-minute drive from Gatwick and less than a two-hour drive from central London. A former barn that has been recently restored, the property has five bedrooms, three bathrooms, a modern kitchen and a study. With expansive country views on three sides and French doors opening onto a huge terrace and manicured southwest-facing garden, the house is a WFH dream. The fields are perfect if you own horses (or chickens), and the pond is a magnet for wildlife.

EPC rating B (potential A)
Upside Planning potential for a swimming pool.
Downside Air traffic from nearby Gatwick airport.
Contact fineandcountry.com







Brief encounter
Ask the expert

Q My neighbour has very sensitive and bright security lights that switch on whenever cats go past. The flashing often wakes us up at night. Where do we stand legally?

A Artificial lighting causes two kinds of legal nuisance.

First, any act or omission on a person's land that interferes with the enjoyment of a neighbour's property can amount to a private nuisance. For example, in the 1984 New Zealand case of *Bank of New Zealand v Greenwood* a neighbour was held liable where an architect-designed glass veranda roof reflected dazzling sunlight onto the other side of the street. And the courts in this country have ordered injunctions or compensation awards on at least three occasions in which security lights or floodlights caused nuisance to neighbours.

It is unlikely the owner of the lighting could simply argue that victims are able to protect themselves with thicker curtains. In the most recent leading nuisance case the Supreme Court decided that flat-owners in central London don't have to protect themselves from prying eyes by putting up blinds, and the same principle undoubtedly applies to nuisance caused by excessive security lighting.

Second, "artificial light emitted from premises so as to be prejudicial to health or a nuisance" is a statutory public nuisance under section 79(fb) of the Environmental Protection Act 1990. Local authorities have a duty to take reasonably practicable steps to investigate complaints of light emitted from premises. If satisfied that a statutory nuisance exists (or is about to occur) they must serve an abatement notice under section 80 of the act. It is important to recognise that there are exceptions in section 79(5b) that exempt bright lights on public land such as railway premises, bus stations, prisons and defence sites.

Light pollution can therefore be a private and a public nuisance. You can take action yourself or ask the council to consider an abatement notice.

Mark Loveday is a barrister with Tanfield Chambers. Email questions to brief.encounter@thetimes.co.uk



View the UK's most luxurious residential properties
MANSION GLOBAL
mansionglobal.com/london

Nottinghamshire

A gothic-style vicarage that has been converted into an eco home complete with ground source heat pump, solar panels and underfloor heating. Inside, the house has been wonderfully refurbished — with a free-standing copper bathtub in an en suite, for example. There are period features too, including stained glass windows, fireplaces and exposed beams. The four-bedroom house, which sits in just under seven acres, is in Dunham-on-Trent, a 25-minute drive from Lincoln. The nearest railway station is Saxilby, seven miles away, with direct trains to Sheffield and Doncaster. The attached coach house has planning permission for conversion to a two-bedroom house.

EPC rating C (potential B)
Upside A beautiful refurbishment.
Downside Close to the busy A57.
Contact savills.com



France

Vence is a medieval walled village set in the hills of the Alpes Maritimes department in the Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur region, on the French Riviera. Famous for its spring water and a chapel designed by Henri Matisse, the town is a 35-minute drive from both Nice and Antibes. Sitting high up in the village is this south-facing villa with swimming pool and sea and mountain views. The 281 sq m property has four bedrooms and four bathrooms, a games room, an office and a laundry room. The chic kitchen is in brushed matt black and there is a sitting room used as a gym.

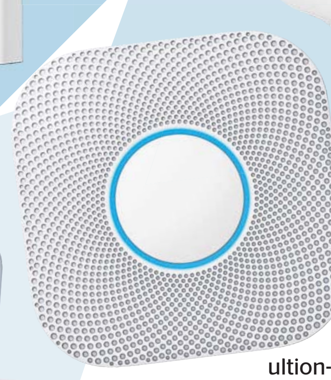
Upside Outdoor terraces and a private garage in the extensive 2,190 sq m gardens.
Downside You may need a car as the road up to the house is steep.
Contact knightfrank.co.uk



Be smart, be safe

From video doorbells to smoke alarms, our pick of the smartphone-compatible devices to secure your home. By Tom Knowles







From top left: Ring Video Doorbell Pro 2; Arlo Ultra 2; Google Nest Protect; the Ultion Nuki smart door lock

The doorbell has undergone a revolution in recent years. No longer does it simply "ding dong" to sound the arrival of a guest; today 4.5 million UK households have a video version that links to an app on their phone to monitor deliveries to their door remotely, see who is calling before opening and to protect their home.

Such is the rise in the popularity of video doorbells that this week the Office for National Statistics announced it would be including security or surveillance cameras in the basket of goods and services it monitors each month to measure inflation.

It is not just doorbells. All parts of home security, from CCTV to door locks, alarms and flood detectors, have been modernised, with most now able to connect to smartphones, powered by wi-fi and controlled by smart speakers.

However, with such devices being connected to the internet, Lisa Barber, tech editor at the consumer rights group Which?, says it is worth doing your research to ensure the device offers cybersecurity protection.

"Our investigations have shown that if you skimp on quality it could leave your home vulnerable to hackers," she says. "Beware of cheap products online, often originating from China, from unknown brands that are almost impossible to contact if you have a problem." Here is a guide to some of the best smart home security products available.

For the front door

Ring Video Doorbell Pro 2, £219.99, en-uk.ring.com

Ring, owned by Amazon, is the most popular brand of video doorbells in the UK, and for good reason. It is simple to use and has seven versions to choose from, suiting most needs and properties. Along with being an actual doorbell, it has a camera, speaker, microphone and motion sensor that enables owners to see who is at their door, record them and speak to them, all from their smartphone. A good option is Ring's Video Doorbell Pro 2. It is wired, avoiding the need for batteries, and has an incredibly clear video resolution while also working well at night.

Ultion Nuki smart door lock, £259, ultion-lock.co.uk

Alongside video doorbells there are smart locks that tend to offer better defence than a traditional lock while allowing remote activation. The smart bit of the lock is only visible from the inside of the door; crucially it also works with a manual key if needed. The lock can connect to your phone via Bluetooth to open, or can be activated remotely if users buy a bridge (£89). It can also be voice controlled, works with Alexa and allows you to send a digital key to a guest's phone for timed or permanent access. It comes with a five-year guarantee that pays out £2,000 if burglars snap the lock to gain entry.

For outside

Arlo Ultra 2, £629.99, arlo.com

The Arlo Ultra 2 is one of the most sophisticated home security cameras available. It sends a notification to the user's phone if it detects motion, allowing the homeowner to log in and view what's happening in real time.

The camera has two-way audio, offers 4K HDR video colour footage for both day and night, can track a subject so they are always in shot, and can detect if motion was made by a person, animal or vehicle. It has a 12x zoom, meaning it can pick out normally blurry details such as a car's registration plate, and has a 180-degree view.

For indoors

SimpliSafe's smart home security system — the Essentials, £344.93, simplisafe.co.uk

A smart home security system removes the need to buy lots of separate gadgets. SimpliSafe is one of the best systems that lets a user manage their home security via their phone and is easy to set up. Its Essentials package comes with a slick-looking base station hub as well as a keypad, internal camera, motion sensor (which ignores pets) and three small white entry sensors that can be attached to doors or windows.

Google Nest Protect, £94.99, amazon.co.uk

Google's Nest Protect sends alerts of smoke or carbon monoxide to an owner's phone, and also usefully has a "heads up" feature that warns if the siren is about to go off. Voice alerts also tell the owner which room the danger is in. The alarm can be stopped through an app or by a button on the device. It also continually self-tests to make sure its sensors are accurate.




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Schools, tax and convenience are all factors as to why the wealthy don't want to put down roots. By David Byers



COVER STORY

The rich renters

In 1975 Margaret Thatcher said that she wanted Britain to be a "property-owning democracy". Today that dream seems further away than ever, as decades of rapid price rises, a shortage of housing supply and interest rates that are twice as expensive as a year ago price people out of the market.

According to the 2021 census the proportion of households that own the home they live in is 62.5 per cent — down from 64.3 per cent in 2011 — equivalent to half a million fewer home-owning households. Meanwhile 20.3 per cent of households rented their accommodation privately — a total of 5 million — up from 16.7 per cent in 2011, or 3.9 million.

The vast majority of people who rent do so because they cannot afford to buy. However, they include doctors, civil servants, financiers and the super-rich — individuals who would certainly have owned their homes 40 years ago.

According to research carried out for The Times by the Hamptons estate agency, about 221,000 households earning more than £100,000 a year rent privately in England and Wales — about 12 per cent of the total in this earning bracket. And there are 42,486 households earning more than £150,000 who do so — that's about 10 per cent of this group.

As you might expect, higher earners pay well over the national average in rent, the agency's analyst David Fell has found. Those earning between £100,000 and £150,000 typically pay £3,132 a month in rent, while those who have an income of £150,000 or more typically pay £4,462 a month. The national average is £1,230 — a figure that has risen 10 per cent in a year as rental demand outpaces supply.

Then there is the rapidly growing cohort of very rich renters — or uber-renters, such as footballers, celebrities and business titans — who commonly pay £40,000 a week for some of the most luxurious mansions in exclusive London neighbourhoods and country piles in the Cotswolds and Cheshire.

For Trevor Abrahmsohn, the owner of the luxury estate agency Glentree in northwest London, this was unheard of only a few years ago. "If you go back two decades, £10,000 per week was the highest long-term rent you would ever have to pay for a property," he says. "Now it's absolutely routine for people to pay £35,000 per week in our sector — or £1.82 million per year."

So why do rich households choose to rent instead of buy, and does all this sound the death knell for our property-owning democracy? We find out.

The middle class renters: it's affordability and schools

There is fierce competition for entry to highly rated state schools, particularly in London, making properties near to them unaffordable, so many resort to renting. The Savills estate agency found that for secondary school entry in England last September, all but 17.2 per cent of applicants received an offer from their first-choice school. However, in outer London 29 per cent of applicants didn't get in to their first choice of school. This has led to the emergence of



Above and on the cover: a five-bedroom townhouse in Ladbroke Grove, west London, is available to rent at £80,000pcm through Rokstone

hyper-local property price bubbles and a spate of renting. For example, in the borough of Brent 30.2 per cent of applicants missed out on their first-choice secondary school, and there was a 12.4 per cent growth in house prices in the 12 months to last October, rendering a property purchase unaffordable for some. "Many families pay over the odds for a home within their [desired] catchment," says Frances McDonald, Savills' residential research analyst.

Ben Whitehouse, 51, who lives near Redland Green School in Bristol, told The Sunday Times last month that there had been intense competition for places at the school. He applied for his daughter Isabella, 11, to go there. "We live 1.3km away and did consider moving house to get closer, but because the competition for places in Bristol is so intense house price inflation in those key zones is huge," he said.

On the other hand, Fell says that some middle-class families love the area in which they are renting, but because of runaway property prices can't afford to buy there. "They tend to be renting somewhere that offers them a lifestyle they could not afford — or at least afford with current levels of disposable income — were they to purchase the same home, or even [another] in the same neighbourhood," he says.

LonRes, a property data company, examined the financial difference between renting and buying for a family who wanted to live in a flat in a selection of ten popular postcode areas in southwest and west London. The family would have to pay either an average price of £861,117 to buy the flat or £659 a week (£34,268 per year) to rent. If they bought a property at the average price, the stamp duty would be £30,555, equivalent to 46 weeks of rent.

There was also an increase in rental prices in many rural areas during the Covid pandemic because of the so-called race for space, in which middle class families living in London moved to the countryside, often renting first so they could gauge whether they liked the area enough to settle there or because lack of supply made it difficult to buy.

The super-rich renters: pay your rent, avoid the tax

If you're an uber-tenant — such as a professional footballer, an American technology billionaire or a member of the Middle Eastern super-rich — why rent rather than buy?

The answer could be that you don't want to stay in the UK long-term —

i

'We're still renting four years on'

For the make-up artist Emily Metcalfe, 41, and her husband, Richard, 45, their decision to rent a cottage in the village of Great Rollright, just outside the Cotswold market town of Chipping Norton in Oxfordshire, was an attempt to "try before you buy" so they could get used to their new area.

The couple rented the three-bedroom house in February 2019, paying about £2,000 per month, and also managed to get one of their two daughters, Pippa, then aged 9, to an in-demand primary school in a nearby village, which they had specifically targeted before coming down to the area. Emily and Richard, who manages high-profile food and music festivals, sold their three-bedroom cottage in West Yorkshire before making their move.

They had only intended to be in their rental cottage for a few months, to decide where to buy. "Renting was our choice because it gave us the opportunity to see which areas we liked and which we did not. We found out quickly that the kind of places we were looking at when we were sitting in Yorkshire weren't right."



However, four years later they are unexpectedly still in the same cottage. The pandemic seriously harmed Richard's work and temporarily hit their budget to buy a house, while the huge influx of buyers from London propelled some houses well beyond their price range. "When we were looking during and after the pandemic, we were getting overpriced houses because the people looking were more affluent than ourselves," she says.

Richard's work has returned full-pelt and they are ready to try again with the property hunt. They are aiming for houses of about £650,000 around Woodstock, which is closer to where Pippa, now 13, is at secondary school. Jemima, 6, is going to the primary school Pippa used to attend.

"About two months ago we picked up the hunt again. I feel like we know the area really well now; we've settled in and we're fed up with renting. We are ready for our own home."



Above: a furnished five-bedroom house in Swinbrook, Oxfordshire, is available to let for £10,950pcm through Savills

often the very rich have transient lifestyles, so they either travel frequently or want to stay for only a few months, either for a fixed-term contract, or for a season or two if they're sports stars.

Second — and by far most important, according to agents — is the amount of tax they would have to pay if they bought a property. This sum has risen exponentially over the years with the rising cost of stamp duty, and increased further when in April 2021 Rishi Sunak, the chancellor at the time, introduced an additional 2 per cent levy on foreign buyers. This leaves the wealthiest overseas buyers with stamp duty rates up to 17 per cent of purchase price; on a property worth £25 million, for example, the stamp duty would be £4.25 million. Abrahmsohn says that in such cases it is an "absolute no-brainer" to rent instead, perhaps paying £1 million a year — a fraction of the stamp duty costs.

The 2 per cent rate has so far raised only £219 million, a small portion of the overall stamp duty take, with most would-be buyers renting instead.

Among the celebrities known to have recently been renting UK properties were the pop star Rihanna, said to have paid £16,000 a week, and Justin Bieber, reported to have paid £27,000 — both in north London.

This so-called super-prime rental market is growing incredibly fast in the capital. According to the Knight Frank estate agency's prime global rental index, released this week, London's most expensive areas registered 18 per cent rental growth in the 12 months to December 2022 — way above the average national increase.

Where do the very rich renters live?

Savills examined its database to map the locations of super-prime properties, which they categorise as those having rents of at least £4,000 a week in London or £2,000 a week elsewhere in the UK. It found that the majority of these rentals are in the London boroughs of Westminster (42 per cent) and Kensington and Chelsea (38 per cent).

Outside London 26 per cent of these high-value rentals are in Elmbridge, in Surrey, which is also home to gated communities such as Wentworth and St George's Hill; 9 per cent are in Windsor and Maidenhead, in Berkshire; 8 per cent are in the Cotswolds; and 8 per cent are in Cheshire East, popular with Premier League footballers. Savills is advertising a five-bedroom country retreat in Burford, Oxfordshire, for a rent of £10,950 a month.

Sabaya Verger, a partner at the Tedworth Property estate agency in Kensington and Chelsea, says that some super-rich foreign nationals who rent properties often intend to buy eventually and are merely in the process of deciding where to settle — a family from Madrid paid £8,500 a week in rent for a six-bedroom home in south Kensington and bought a property in the same area two years later; a northern European couple are renting a mansion in Kensington for £400,000 a year and looking to buy.

...but keep things in perspective

High-earning renters account for a minority of households in their individual income brackets and comprise only a tiny sliver of everyone living in the private rented sector. Overall 4.3 per cent of households renting privately earn more than £100,000 in England and Wales, while only 0.8 per cent of renting households earn more than £150,000.

In contrast to the higher earners, Hamptons found the proportion of those renting was 56 per cent for those with household incomes between £20,000 and £40,000, and 59 per cent for those earning between £40,000 and £60,000.

T
The world's best house
Online and this weekend in The Sunday Times

'Nobody should be put on the scrapheap. We all have a use'

Repair Shop host Jay Blades aims to restore life to the high street with his first shop. He talks to Hugh Graham

The Repair Shop is about more than just fixing furniture. It's about healing people. That's why the hit BBC show, about people who bring in their family heirlooms to have them repaired, attracts seven million viewers per episode. Restoring a damaged piece of furniture does more than just elicit tears of joy from its owners though: it can actually transform the lives of the repairer.

CORIN MESSER/BNPS



Jay Blades in Jay & Co. Below: Steve Wyatt, his business partner

The host, Jay Blades, 53, knows this only too well. In May 2022 Blades was awarded an MBE for services to craft. It was the culmination of a remarkable journey for a man who was raised by a single mother on a Hackney council estate, left school without qualifications, got tangled up in gang culture, became homeless and suffered a mental breakdown. Teaching young people to fix furniture helped to turn things around for him, eventually leading to *The Repair Shop*.

"Restoring furniture helped my mental health," says Blades at the opening of his first retail shop, Jay & Co, on Monday, in Poole, Dorset. Dressed in an eye-popping lime-green jumper and one of his trademark flat caps, Blades is holding court on one of his customised mid-century sofas as 200 fans queue to catch a glimpse of their hero. "I had a breakdown about eight years ago. It helped me get back on my feet. Once you can focus on something other than your own problems, it takes your problems away."

So it's only fitting that Jay & Co is another feelgood story about turning your life around. Not only has the shop given a new lease of life to old pieces of furniture — mostly mid-century classics from G Plan and Ercol and original designs by Blades — but his business partner, Steve Wyatt, 45, also found salvation in rescuing broken items.

Wyatt was a drug addict for 22 years: heroin and crack were his poisons of choice and doctors told him he wouldn't see 40. He went to prison for three years and was homeless for another three. He was in and out of rehab for ten years until a 12-step programme finally stuck nine years ago. He also credits his recovery with learning how to restore furniture at one of the rehab centres: it gave him a sense of purpose and filled a void. "With the furniture, I almost relate it to my own journey," Wyatt says. "It's like you're taking something that is beaten and battered, giving it love and transforming it into something beautiful. I was beaten and battered."

Restoring furniture has become a new, healthier addiction. "For me, before it was all about raising money for drugs, buying drugs and using drugs," Wyatt says. "Now it's about looking for the furniture, restoring the furniture and selling the furniture, and then trying to find more. It's better than any drug that I've taken, and I've done a few."

> Restoring furniture is like restoring yourself

In 2020 Wyatt was working at a vintage emporium when he heard about a scheme by Legal & General to regenerate a derelict stretch of shops in Poole town centre — the financial services provider was offering creative start-ups shopfronts with no rents or rates for two years. He pitched an idea for his shop, Restored Retro, and took possession in December 2020. Blades had met Wyatt in 2015 through his charity, Out of the Dark, which trained disadvantaged people in furniture restoration. When he heard that Wyatt was opening a shop, he offered him some of his own customised piece to sell. Wyatt sold 70 pieces in 18 months, and when a gallery next door became vacant, Blades agreed to open an adjoining shop with his name on it and let Wyatt manage the business. Wyatt has said he is "pretty sure this shop saved my life".



"Restoring furniture is like restoring yourself," Blades says. "If you see a broken, knackered chair and you're able to fix it, put stuff into it, paint it, glue it, screw another leg on it, put some fabric on it, give it that unique twist… Nobody should be put on the scrapheap. We all have a use. You just need certain things put into you in order to shine."

On his recent appearance on *Desert Island Discs*, one of the records Blades chose was Gregory Porter's *Take Me to the Alley*. The lyrics about lonely, afflicted people resonated with Blades. "Take me to those guys. I don't really want to know about the people who are famous and have loads of money, the trendy ones. We should all be going to the alley. That song is a metaphor for people in general and Steve is a prime example."

Blades hopes that *The Repair Shop*, with its tear-jerking stories of make do and mend, is changing attitudes in Britain. He is encouraged by the rise in repair cafés and believes people are thinking twice about chucking out that old sofa. "A lot of people are now seeing the beauty in something that's got a life. It's got some scars. That builds character. There's nobody that will take their granny to Hollywood to get full-body plastic surgery. You love the character that she's got, all those wrinkles. So why would you want her to look perfect?"

He is concerned that traditional craft skills are dying out, which is why he is on a mission to get young people involved in crafts through his work with the Prince's Foundation. Blades also thinks there should be more vocational training for kids who aren't academically inclined. "When I first got into furniture it was mainly to teach young people. And a lot of those young people had been given up on. When we showed them how to restore furniture, it boosted their self-esteem and made them believe that they can achieve something and [turn it into] a career."

He hopes that projects like his shop, and the Legal & General scheme, could be a model to regenerate high streets, while doing some social good, fuelling the repair/crafts movement and fostering community.

Blades says the furniture restoration community "is the best you can ever be in, because everybody's all about fixing something. If you have a problem, you can go to any one of those people. And they can give you a solution. And they'll support you in fixing the problem together."



Assorted fabrics and wallpaper from £100, cathynordstrom.com



Stokke Sleepi Mini V3 cot, £309, naturalmat.co.uk

Baby steps

Using vintage-inspired wallpaper and an old rug, interiors stylist Kiera Buckley-Jones has transformed her box room into a stylish nursery for her future child. She shares her tips

My first baby is due this spring. Handily I was given nine months to get myself and my home sorted, and the nesting instinct is real. I've been clearing out my clutter, reorganising the home and embarking on a complete kitchen refit.

Crucially I've been tackling the decoration of the nursery. As an interiors stylist I'm adept at planning decor schemes but this is a daunting task — designing a room for a baby I've yet to meet. Friends recommend getting started in the second trimester, because this is when you'll have the most stamina. The consensus is to start at between 20 and 27 weeks pregnant. Leaving the decisions, purchases and decoration to the third trimester is a no-go since your energy will be zapped.

Having decided not to find out the sex, my boyfriend and I have agreed on a neutral decorating scheme. Not that the new arrival will notice — they will be too busy sleeping or eating when they first arrive. The decoration of the nursery is mainly for the future parents: a task to displace their anxiety over the unknown that lies before them. So a calm, restful and neutral scheme is the aesthetic and mood we're subscribing to.

The baby will be commandeering the box room, which has had various incarnations — it has been my props cupboard, office, sewing room and storage and a garage for my boyfriend's bikes. My previous housemate and I used to jokingly refer to it as the baby's room, so it's lovely this is what it will become. It is a fair size for a little one, with a sweet built-in cupboard that we will fill with handled storage boxes to organise tiny clothes into size groups.







Above: the nursery created by Kiera Buckley-Jones, right, features vintage-inspired wallpaper from the Swedish brand Littlephant

For the wallpaper we have selected a vintage-inspired design from the Swedish brand Littlephant. It features apple trees, elephants, boating ponds and a cyclist (a nod to my boyfriend's cycling habit). An older child might not see its charm but, again, the decoration of the nursery is more for the parents anyway.

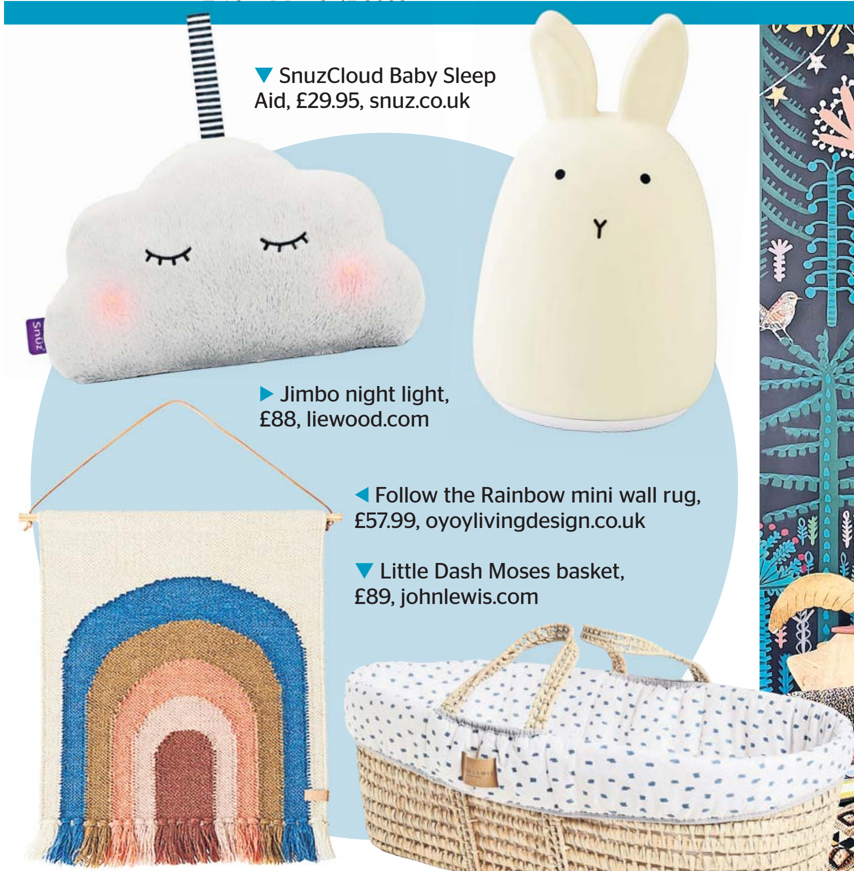
We are reluctant to buy furniture that we will need to update in a year: it's a faff. The goal is to future-proof the space for as long as we can. So we've invested in a cot, the Rio by Tutti Bambini, that transforms into a child's bed (£249, tuttibambini.com). This comes with a cot-top changing platform, so you don't have to buy a changing table. Although you could consider the Porsche of cribs, the Stokke Sleepi — you can buy panels to extend it as the child grows (£529, stokke.com).

For the window treatment a blackout blind is crucial, so we will get a cord-free one from Ikea. The curtains are yet to be confirmed — either a Tori Murphy Harbour Stripe or a Romo Linara linen finished with a playful Imogen Heath pom-pom trim.

I will also use what I already have, such as a white String Pocket shelf that will store books and baby paraphernalia. A shelf with a rail is a good option, such as the Obaby Maya shelf (£55, obaby.co.uk), so you can hang a few special outfits. There is a colourful Anthropologie rug for the floor, which I'll layer with a new padded H&M playmat. I am reluctant to clutter the space since inevitably we will need room for toy storage and a desk and chair as time goes on, so for now the cot will be the only piece of furniture.

There is a strong second-hand baby furniture market, so any prospective parents can explore that as an option. I would just make sure all the correct screws are included, and you must replace the mattress for a new child.

A vintage chest of drawers could be upcycled with Annie Sloan paint and new drawer handles if you don't want



▼ SnuzCloud Baby Sleep Aid, £29.95, snuz.co.uk

▶ Jimbo night light, £88, liewood.com

◀ Follow the Rainbow mini wall rug, £57.99, oyoylivingdesign.co.uk

▼ Little Dash Moses basket, £89, johnlewis.com



Lucy Tiffney's chalk paint mural, anniesloan.com



Honley stool and nursing chair set, £878, mamasandpapas.com



Rattan Cloud bookshelf, £195, thewhitecompany.com (in stock March 26)



Wiltshire Blossom Landsdowne linen in Lichen, libertyfabric.com

to buy everything new. A friend of mine spent only £30 on her nursery and that was on a deep carpet clean — everything else she picked up for free or was given by relatives and friends.

As an expectant mother I've been helpfully bombarded with WhatsApp lists or Excel documents of baby essentials. Others are happy to share advice or equipment they no longer need. From my focus group of new and expectant mums, these are the essentials: a cot with mattress and sheets; a nursing chair (I'm going to use a rocking chair I have in the bedroom); a blackout blind; clothes storage; a monitor; a white noise machine; a room thermometer; and a nappy caddy.

One thing I didn't realise until I became pregnant is that the baby sleeps in your bedroom until they are six months old, so we have a Moses basket and a stand from a friend who didn't use it. We've also been recommended the SnuzPod bedside crib and the Chicco Next2me — both sit at the height of your mattress to make night-time feeds easier. Although I'd actively encourage getting most of the nursery ready before the baby arrives, you could make tiny tweaks to the decoration when they are here.

When it comes to the final creative decision on designing a nursery there is an element of compromise with your partner. My friend Amy, also not knowing the sex of her unborn child, did a good job: her husband wanted a dinosaur theme while she was drawn to a calm palette, so they created a dino theme in neutrals. My biggest compromise is yet to come — the bikes are leaving the nursery but are going to be rehomed in the office. That's a fresh decorating dilemma I'll tackle once the baby is here.

Savvy spender

Scrub up well this spring with social media hacks

Your weekly guide to living well for less
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victoria.brzezinski@the-times.co.uk

As spring-cleaning season approaches I've fallen down a niche rabbit hole on social media. I say niche, but the fondness for #CleanTok is huge, with TikTok videos on this theme racking up more than 69 billion views.

Barbara Costello (@brunchwithbabs) went viral this week with a pillow-cleaning hack that was viewed about four million times in 24 hours. "Experts say you're supposed to replace your pillows every 12 months. That would cost a fortune," the cleaning influencer, 74, says in the video while demonstrating how to "strip" old, yellowed pillows in the bathtub with revoltingly satisfying success. It gets rid of "the build-up, grime and body oils that a washing machine can't get out".

Her guide is as follows. First, fill the bathtub with the hottest water possible then dissolve a stripping mix (¼ cup baking soda, ¼ cup borax and two cups of washing-up liquid) in the water. Submerge and soak the pillows for up to 24 hours, flipping them periodically while soaking. Drain, then squeeze the excess water out of the pillows. After stripping them, wash the pillows on a normal cycle without detergent. Don't use dryer sheets after stripping; toss tennis balls or dryer balls into the dryer until the pillows are dry and fluffy.

While your pillows are soaking it is prime time to give your mattress a good vacuum on both sides. Not all mattresses need it, but some should be flipped every season to prevent sagging. Never soak your mattress — spot-clean with a stain remover — but if it is pongy use a sieve to sprinkle bicarbonate of soda over it. Work it in with a scrubbing brush and leave it to sit for a minimum of an hour to absorb smells, then vacuum off. A traditional airing on a sunny day will disinfect mattresses, bedding and rugs — but if that is not feasible a well-ventilated sunlit room should do the job.

> **Attach sticky felt pads soaked in essential oil near the mouth of bins to mask bad smells**

Other household tips blazing a trail online include an easy bin-refresh hack: attach sticky felt pads (the kind that adhere to the feet of furniture to prevent scratching the floors) soaked in essential oil near the mouth of the receptacle to mask bad smells.

If you have an air-fryer that is proving annoying to clean, soak the basket in baking soda, washing-up liquid and hot water for ten minutes for a gleaming result. To soften burnt-on residue on pots and pans, simmer water and a drop of washing-up liquid in them. After cooling, a scrub with a sponge or scourer should remove any stuck-on remnants.



Try as I might I cannot achieve the bedroom finesse of Mackenzie William, a "digital creator" from Toronto whose super-specific tranche of bed-making videos have tens of millions of views on Instagram (@macken2le). William eschews crumpled linens; his videos show him carefully tucking in pristine hotel sheets and ironing them while *on* the bed for ultimate crispness.
Victoria Brzezinski

Around the world

Courmayeur

What do you get when you combine world-class skiing with Michelin-level food? Italy's gastronomic mecca in the mountains. By Hugo Cox



If your idea of lunch up a mountain consists of underdone steak frites washed down with an overpriced glass of red wine then you might want to consider Courmayeur.

For years the Italian resort, nestled just below Mont Blanc, has been making a name for itself as one of the Alps' best — and best value — gastronomic centres. This accolade is sealed by the town's Peak of Taste, an annual three-day food festival — the latest edition of which began yesterday — in which chefs from Michelin-starred restaurants cook meals in the many restaurants up the mountain and in the town.

One visitor who will be sampling the town's culinary delights is Jean-Philippe Blondet, head chef of Alain Ducasse at the Dorchester. "The town is really friendly and doesn't feel exclusive. It has that feel that everyone knows each other and people care about the environment," he says, pointing to the Via Roma, the resort's bustling cobbled pedestrian street, flanked by a mix of top-end boutiques, bars and restaurants.

Jonathan Davies, 54, who grew up in Hampshire, discovered the town in the 1990s while chalet manager in the Swiss resort of Verbier. "It has great accessible skiing; the pedestrianised high street gives the town a relaxed feel; it's a great place to have a coffee or meet friends for lunch — and from early March it gets great sun," he says.

The resort is growing in popularity with British visitors, according to Raphael Castelnuovo, 35, who runs Maison La Saxe, a B&B in the town. "British visitors started increasing in the 2019-20 season and have picked up again following the pandemic," he says.

Castelnuovo bought what was then a dilapidated farmhouse with no electricity or hot water eight years ago for roughly €500,000, spending another €300,000 on a two-and-a-half-year renovation supervised by his father, Gaetano, an architect. "The area has great builders, carpenters and plumbers and so on but you need an architect to do any serious work like this," Castelnuovo says.



The average price of a home here is €7,575 (£6,695) per sq m, according to Idealista, a European-property portal. On Immobiliare.com, an Italian property website, there are 12 homes for sale for less than €400,000, nine between €400,000 and €1 million, and 14 between €1 million and €5 million.

Few renovation opportunities remain in Courmayeur, though. If you are looking for a project or want better value for money, you need to travel down the Aosta Valley, to towns such as La Salle (a ten-minute drive, with an ancient church and a few shops at its centre, and where the average for-sale price is €3,033 per sq m, according to Idealista) or Morgex. Both are just a 20-minute drive from La Thuile, another popular resort.

Davies rents a one-bedroom flat in La Salle for €600 a month, including bills, although he is looking to buy a one or two-bedroom apartment. For his budget of €400,000 he believes he will find a flat in a farmhouse conversion, with a balcony and garage. "There are plenty around but you might only hear about them through word of mouth," he says.

This is the second annual Peak of Taste festival, but British gourmands have been attracted to Courmayeur for much longer than that.

Eight years ago Amin Momen, who organises bespoke ski trips across the Alps through his company, Momentum Ski, and the British celebrity chef Heston Blumenthal established an annual long weekend of skiing and eating in Courmayeur, which now takes place to coincide with the festival. The two men had the idea for the trip the year before, during a memorable lunch up the mountain at Chateau Branlant.



Top: a four-bedroom penthouse in Courmayeur is on sale for POA through Engel and Völkers. Above: a four-bedroom villa in the hamlet of Pussey is on sale for €3.4 million with Engel and Völkers

> The Peak of Taste festival runs until Sunday and from March 24 to 25

"I remember it distinctly. Tagliatelle with porcini mushrooms and amazing views," Momen says. "A bottle of white — a local chardonnay — and two bottles of red — a pinot noir — followed by a Prisonnier, both from Anselmet [an Aosta Valley producer].

"Courmayeur has simple food with beautiful ingredients that are incredibly well cooked, and great wines, served [in restaurants] with a great ambience, and easy dishes for the kids. And it is roughly half the price of what you pay in resorts like Zermatt [in Switzerland]."

Leading chefs who have featured on Momen's previous trips include Clare Smyth — who became the first British female chef to win three Michelin stars, for Core, in Notting Hill, west London — Tom Kerridge, Marcus Wareing and Jason Atherton as well as Blumenthal.

This year Blondet, who is travelling as part of the Momentum Ski tour, will serve his meal in Les Dames Anglaises — a restaurant in Courmayeur. He is looking forward to the produce, the sport and the famous local welcome.

"It's a wonderful place to cook, with the beautiful local ingredients, and the Italians have that great mentality — so convivial, festive and open," he says.

"And I'm planning to ski afterwards, although I'm not sure what I'll be like — I haven't done it for 20 years."

Moving Stories 'I wanted to buy my first property while I was still single'

Ever since I was young I have never liked to ask my family for money. I've tried to do everything myself. And that includes buying my first property. Saving is second nature to me. But for seven years, when I rented a one-bedroom flat in Islington, north London, I was paying £950 a month plus council tax. It was money going down the drain [says Aneela Khan, a legal services manager in her thirties].

So I started making simple savings. I walked to and from work every day, which took me about 35 minutes each way. I walked 90 per cent of the time — on weekends too — and probably saved about £200 a month. I saved a similar amount by bringing a packed lunch every day. I'd make two portions of my dinner and use the second for my lunch. I will often do khichdi, a south Asian dish made with rice and lentils.

I'll also save up to £60 a month by not buying a £3 coffee at Costa or Starbucks every day. I know people who live hand-to-mouth, but they are always buying coffees and lunches. Tea and coffee are supplied by my employer, so I drink that. I also bring my own in case they run out. I recently bought a pack of 400 Tetley tea bags from Asda for just £6.

I love to shop for clothes, but I'm a bargain hunter. I plan ahead and buy my summer clothes in winter sales and vice versa. I will splurge on staples like shoes and coats, which will



Aneela Khan bought her flat without any financial help

last longer, then save on other items. At Zara the cheapest top is maybe £29, so instead I'll go to Primark and buy four tops at £8 each. I'm not trying to impress anyone. I know people who carry DKNY bags, but it's never bothered me because I have more money than them. I'd rather have a £10 handbag with £100 in it than a £100 handbag with £10 in it.

I don't eat out a lot, but when I do, my friend and I go to Royal Nawaab restaurant in Perivale, west London. If you go out to most restaurants it might cost you £60 each for three courses. But Royal Nawaab has a buffet of 123 dishes for £26.95 a head. It is a five-star Asian restaurant, but has all kinds of cuisines: pasta, pizza, lasagne. I am amazed that there are a lot of white people there as well as Asians.

After saving for seven years I had enough for a deposit. I bought a one-bedroom flat last year at New Market Place in East Ham, a Barratt London development, for £309,000 using a 40 per cent Help to Buy loan. I put down a 5 per cent deposit with my savings — about £15,000. I'm paying £606 a month, so saving more than £300 a month from my rental.

To furnish my flat I went to Curry's and got a £699 washer-dryer for £549 because it was a display item and had a sticker mark on it. I constantly check websites for sales and bought a £1,629 bed that was on sale for £969 from Homesdirect365. And I bought a sofa for £700; the original price was £989.

I'm from Pakistan where men tend to make all the financial decisions, but when I moved to London — originally to study — I wanted to make it on my own. And I wanted to buy my first property while I was still single. In December I got married and my husband will soon be moving in with me. But I don't want to rely on a husband. I want to be a partner and not a burden.

I'm not saying you have to live a miserable life. And I'm not saying dining out, shopping and socialising are bad things. But they can distract you from your main goal. You have to be clever with money management. It all depends on your priorities.

Interview by Hugh Graham


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COMING SOON - Cambs Great Shelford; **Cheshire** Handforth; **Devon** Barnstaple, Exeter, Honiton, Totnes; **Essex** Saffron Walden; **Hants** Basingstoke, Drayton, Fareham; **Kent** Gravesend, Tenterden, Staplehurst, Westwood Cross; **Northants** Brackley; **Norfolk** Diss; **Notts** Beeston; **Oxfordshire** Banbury, Bicester, Didcot; **Surrey** Cranleigh; **West Midlands** King's Heath; **Wilts** Calne; **Wirral** West Kirby; **Worcestershire** Evesham.

AWAITING PLANNING - Bristol Staple Hill; **Bucks** Newport Pagnell; **Cheshire** Penketh, Wilmslow; **Devon** Exmouth; **Dorset** Christchurch; **Essex** Clacton-on-Sea, Old Harlow; **Gtr Manchester** Timperley; **Hants** Romsey; **Herts** Hertford; **Kent** Larkfield, Tonbridge; **Somerset** Wells; **Suffolk** Stowmarket; **Sussex** Bexhill-on-Sea, Southwater; **West Midlands** Aldridge, Kingswinford; **Yorkshire** Wigginton.

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THE TIMES

2 ARTS

March 17 | **2023**



One week to learn the part

Just four days of rehearsal

Rave reviews on opening night

Patsy Ferran How the Streetcar actress pulled off the ultimate feat



Caitlin Moran's Celebrity Watch



6 Jimmy Kimmel

Good morning, sweet Times reader, and welcome to the week where 90 per cent of all conversation on Earth revolved around Gary Lineker's tweets — leaving only 10 per cent of all human discourse left to cover the war, the collapse of Silicon Valley Bank, the train strikes, the economy, and … the Oscars.

Duly aware that chat time was limited, humanity did the sensible thing and devoted the entirety of that 10 per cent to the Oscars! Was Hugh Grant rude on the red carpet to the TV presenter Ashley Graham — or was he just being awkward and British? Was the singer-songwriter Tems's enormous hat an antisocial act — blocking the view of those sitting behind her — or an effective, publicity-gaining accessory?

And is it ever acceptable to use a Nobel peace prize winner — Malala — as the straight man in a joke about Harry Styles? The initial reaction to host Jimmy Kimmel's attempt to do just that — all of Twitter screaming "DISRESPECTFUL!" — suggests not. Comedy has taken that note. Feminist heroines cannot double up as Ernie Wise or Tommy Cannon.

The host, Kimmel, *far right*, did of course have a big job: last year's host, Chris Rock, made a joke about the actress Jada Pinkett Smith's hair and ended up being punched in the face live on TV by her enraged husband, Will Smith. Understandably Kimmel's preparations for taking over as Oscar host took this incident into account.

"Jimmy Kimmel studied 'martial arts' to prepare for hosting Oscars 2023," a headline on the NME explained.

At first I was like, "Wow — that's a very deep dive Kimmel's taken in advance of this gig! Admittedly the whole fight came about because Will and Jada Pinkett Smith have an open marriage, which has led to a lot of scandal and speculation — thus making Will very defensive of any perceived slight against his wife. So perhaps Kimmel's admirable pre-emptive studies will defuse any similar tensions in 2023!"

Then I realised I'd misread "martial arts" as "marital arts" and that Kimmel wasn't going to study socio-sexual dynamics after all.

5 Prince Andrew



For Prince Andrew it seems it never rains but it pours — except in his armpits, which always remain bone dry.

Having been stripped of his royal duties, and potentially losing his 30-room Royal Lodge dwelling, it seems Prince Andrew is undergoing yet another downscaling of his previously lavish lifestyle. This week the King reportedly told his brother that the privy purse would no longer pay for the duke's £32k-a-year, live-in personal yoga instructor.

From now on, Andrew — like the rest of us — will have to do YouTube videos at home and be his own instructor. Modified poses I think would be relevant include: downwardly-mobile dog; (fewer-members-of-) staff pose; and of course his favourite, the lunge.

4 Oscars goodie bag



Staying with the Oscars we had the annual joy of finding out what was in this year's Oscars goodie bag, handed out to nominees for all the big awards — best sound design guy doesn't get this sweet swag — then duly marvelled over by the rest of the world for its insight into what consists of "a treat" for the super famous, wealthy and beautiful.

As always it was a combo of straight-up player stuff — fine wines, $400 perfumes, a three-night break in an Italian lighthouse — and the more … comment-worthy items. For instance, Art Lipo offered a $12,000 "celebrity arm sculpting" voucher, which "gives women an instant lean and toned look to their arms". But … not men? What would happen if men used it? Would they walk around having people go: "Wow — your arms really look like Michelle Obama's"? And would that be bad? I guess we'll only know if 2023 turns into the Year of Men Having Arms Like Women.

But then maybe men would be busier with Bauman Medical's knowing "Slap the $#%& out of alopecia hair transplant and hair loss treatment" voucher: $7,000 towards reseeding, or regrowing, the lustrous skull thatch of your youth.

It must be a complex reaction — opening your goodie bag on one of the most exciting nights of your career, feeling you're in your prime only to find a voucher that is shouting "FAT ARMS!" or "SLAP HEAD!" It feels like a bit of a bad Kinder egg situation: a treat and an insult, all in one. Surely there should be a word for such a thing? A trinsult? The gift-diss? Scrutiny of the Bounty?

3 Paul Mescal



Our final mention of the Oscars is tangential — *Normal People* heart-throb Paul Mescal was nominated for best actor for *Aftersun*, and flew to the award ceremony from London to, eventually, lose. Still, he's pretty busy, having just completed a smash-hit, sell-out run at the Almeida Theatre before heading to the West End.

Like many actors, Mescal tends towards superstition when in theatre. Last week The Mail on Sunday noted Mescal's pre-performance "tradition" with the headline: "'Superstitious' Paul Mescal ate at the same Mexican restaurant in London for 50 DAYS in a row while appearing in *A Streetcar Named Desire*".

Fifty times? Fifty? He went to a Mexican restaurant once — and came back for the next 49 nights? The only possible response to a story like that is, "Wow — that Mescalated quickly."

Thank you. Thank you for listening to my joke.

2 The Pope



Hot news from the world of Catholicism — it seems the Pope has been catching up on the "terms & conditions apply" section on some priestly paperwork and noticed quite a big loophole!

"Pope Francis calls Catholic Church's ban on priests having sex 'temporary' opening door to review of 1,000-year-old celibacy rules", as the Daily Mail sensationally reported.

Wow. This is quite a press release — airily waving away the whole celibacy thing as "temporary"! Can something be temporary that started in 1139AD? Last year we got a puncture just outside Coventry, and I felt quite edgy using the "temporary" wheel for an hour and 47 minutes to get back to London. I think if I'd used it for 1,000 years, I wouldn't be referring to it as "temporary" any more. By that yardstick what else in Catholicism is deemed "temporary"? Does the Pope think of Westminster Cathedral as a pre-fab — "Just until we get a chance to build something more permanent"? Is *Christ the Redeemer* — looming over Rio de Janeiro — merely a pop-up installation? Is the Bible regarded as a "first draft"?

Either way 40 generations after the "temporary" demand for priests was instigated, I think we've learnt one thing: maybe don't sign up to work at a temp agency run by the Catholic Church. "We've got a job for you — temporary secretarial coverage, for someone on maternity leave."

"Oooh — how long's the contract for?"

"Well, it runs until 3026 …"

1A

Gary Lineker

Well, that was quite the week, wasn't it? The last time the sporting world was so rocked by a social media post, it was Coleen Rooney tweeting: "It's Rebekah Vardy's account" — but I will be bold enough to claim that GaryGate was of a magnitude even greater than Wagatha Christie.

To recap: last week national treasure Gary Lineker tweeted from his personal account a criticism of the government's small boats migration policy — a criticism echoed by every leading humanitarian charity, plus the UN — and reignited a long debate: are BBC freelancers bound by the BBC's "impartiality" clause? Or are they allowed freedom of speech and opinion when off the clock?

Lineker was "temporarily" (in the secular sense of the word and not the new Catholic definition) suspended from *Match of the Day*, all his colleagues walked out in support and Britain was "treated" to what appeared to be a haunted, post-apocalypse version of the show with no theme tune, commentary, presenters or analysis. If you've ever wanted to know what eg: Leicester v Chelsea would be like when remade as an alternative sequel to *A Quiet Place*, we found out. "Really creepy" was the general consensus. "Even creepier than the original Bungle on *Rainbow*."

On Monday: a resolution. The BBC reinstated Lineker, apologised and is undergoing an urgent "review" of its impartiality guidelines. Previous pro-government tweets by freelancers Alan Sugar and Andrew Neil are being studied, along with largely anti-government tweets by Lineker and the naturalist Chris Packham, to find a way to ensure that these things don't become, as everything seems to these days, part of "the culture wars".

In advance of this review might I suggest something? Many are noting that people's levels of outrage over BBC freelancers' political views tend to be in direct proportion to their own views: humans are apt to excuse those they agree with, under "it's freedom of speech!" considerations, while becoming alarmed or peeved by those whom they see as "the enemy". In these instances: "They're just inappropriately using their fame as a propaganda platform!" will be cried.

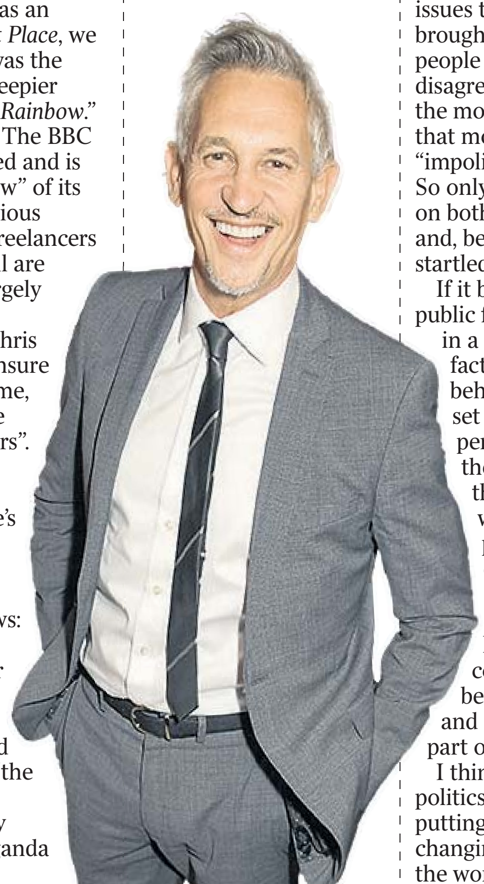
Obviously no one should be crowbarring in their personal political views while at work — whether that's presenting *Match of the Day* or starring in *Bodger and Badger*. But when it comes to giving interviews or posting to social media about politics when acting as a private citizen, I tend to think: why not?

There is an old, embedded idea that generally talking about politics is "impolite", and that having a political view is a bit like having wind. We all have it — but you should only expel it in private, and never mention it unless among very close friends. The only people allowed to talk about politics in public are professional politicians and political analysts. Everyone else who indulges in it is being a bit attention seeking, and almost certainly aggravating the other half of the population.

> "GaryGate was of a magnitude even greater than Wagatha Christie

The problem with this old, rather class-bound belief? Well, we can see it in voting turnouts, and vox pops with people who say, "I'm not political — they're all the same" and, "Politics isn't for people like me." If you "keep" all the politics in a small social coterie of people — who have various feuds and alliances; who ossify into "political language"; who are so nerdily consumed by the world of politics they have no concept of how most people live or think or speak — we end up in the situation we have now. At the last election 33 per cent of people didn't vote, rising to 53 per cent for those aged between 18 and 24; no one ever reads or understands a manifesto; and, judging by the voting-intention polls (YouGov puts it at Labour 45 per cent, Conservatives 23 per cent), there's a media Overton window far to the right of the actual population.

"How do we make young people engage in politics?" all sides regularly cry. Well, by getting Lineker to tweet about Britain's refugee policy. Or getting Marcus Rashford to tweet about free school dinners. Or getting Scrooge McDuck from *The Apprentice* to tweet about Mick Lynch and the strikes. People don't become politically engaged by talking about "politics" as a whole — they start by talking about issues that they care about, which are brought to their attention either by people they care about, or wildly disagree with, in the public arena. At the moment the biggest problem is that most public figures think it's "impolite" to talk about political issues. So only the most extreme and fearless on both sides venture to comment and, because it's so rare, the reaction is startled and extreme.



If it became commonplace for any public figure to discuss political issues in a rational, calm, courteous and factual manner, perhaps we'd stop behaving as if the world had been set on fire when they do. And perhaps we could start discussing the issues rather than, as has been the case this week, the fact they were mentioned in the first place. Right-wing, left-wing, centrist, green, pro-Brexit, pro-trans, gender-critical, religious, secular: we'd be a politically healthier country if people could openly talk about their beliefs, explain them, defend them and maybe even change them, as part of a proper debate.

I think we all sense that modern politics is dysfunctional and off-putting to most voters. The first step in changing that would be not acting like the world is ending when people respond to the natural urge to talk about politics. Why should anyone's political beliefs be a dirty secret? Unless you're ashamed of them. Or you believe that only the professionally political should ever discuss these matters and the rest of the country should clench its intellectual bum cheeks and remain silent.



Bungle

The hot list
Your guide to the weekend

Film



Allelujah
In this adaptation of Alan Bennett's boisterous and witty 2018 play, an icy metropolitan elitist is transformed by the kindness and altruism he witnesses in a fictional Yorkshire hospital. It's directed by Richard Eyre (*Notes on a Scandal*) and has one of the year's best twists, written by the *Call the Midwife* showrunner Heidi Thomas. *See review, page 9. In cinemas*

Theatre

Guys and Dolls
The must-see show of the moment. Nicholas Hytner's gorgeous promenade production lets a good chunk of the audience mingle with the cast, including Marisha Wallace, *right*. The result is that Frank Loesser's immortal musical about New York hustlers looks more joyous and spontaneous than ever. *Bridge Theatre, SE1 (bridgetheatre.co.uk), today, tomorrow*



Classical



The Chevalier
The story of Joseph Bologne, aka the Chevalier de Saint-Georges, is not well known — which is surprising, given that he was a composer, a violinist, Marie Antoinette's confidant and a champion fencer. This piece, presented by the London Philharmonic Orchestra and featuring Braimah Kanneh-Mason, *left*, playing violin works by Bologne, tells his story. *Snape Maltings, Suffolk (brittenpearsarts.org), Sunday*

Pop



Morrissey
Beloved by an eternally loyal fanbase, vilified by a wider music community after an apparent lurch to the far right (denied in a statement in January by the man himself), the Morrissey of 2023 is a more divisive figure than ever. What remains is the musical legacy of brilliant wit and sensitivity, which lives on in his concerts: Smiths masterpieces such as *Girlfriend in a Coma* and *Please, Please Please Let Me Get What I Want* and solo favourites such as *Suedehead* and *Everyday Is Like Sunday* all typically get an airing. *Eventim Apollo, W6 (eventimapollo.com), Sunday*

Comedy



Arthur Smith: My First 75 Years in Comedy
Since he's only 68, you'll have to take Smith's title with a pinch of salt. This valedictory exercise in salt-pinching, though, has him both cracking wise and letting in real tenderness as he retraces his life, career, love affairs and health scares through anecdotes, jokes, pranks, Leonard Cohen songs and (why not?) a Hamlet motif. *Pleasance Theatre, N7 (pleasance.co.uk), tonight, tomorrow*

Visual art

Souls Grown Deep Like the Rivers
A celebration of the resourceful creativity of black artists from the southeastern United States, who reflect on enslavement and social and economic inequality with eclectic innovation. *See review, page 14. Royal Academy (royalacademy.org.uk), today, tomorrow, Sunday*



cover story

‘It was a crazy thing to agree to. I

COVER: MARC BRENNER. BELOW: CHRIS MCANDREW FOR THE TIMES; JED CULLEN/DAVE BENETT/GETTY IMAGES



Patsy Ferran stepped in to play Blanche DuBois in A Streetcar Named Desire, opposite Paul Mescal, with just four days left to rehearse — and then she knocked the critics’ socks off, says Dominic Maxwell

Newly married, with just one more day’s work to go on the sci-fi film she was shooting, at the start of last December Patsy Ferran was looking forward to a leisurely Christmas. She and her husband were due to visit her extended family in Spain and they were also going for a belated honeymoon in New York. She had spent a while there at the start of 2020, appearing in *Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* on Broadway, but the pandemic cut it short after nine previews.

She knew that a production of Tennessee Williams’s *A Streetcar Named Desire* was soon to open at the Almeida in north London. She had heard of Paul Mescal, its male star, a box-office draw thanks to his role in *Normal People*, although she says she doesn’t stay on top of theatre news or showbiz gossip. But she knew about this *Streetcar* because she was friends with its director, Rebecca Frecknall, who in 2018 had cast her in another Tennessee Williams revival, *Summer and Smoke*. One that went from the Almeida to the West End and won Ferran an Olivier for best actress into the bargain.

She also knew, though, that lightning wasn’t about to strike in the same place twice. She knew that Lydia Wilson was playing Blanche DuBois to Mescal’s Stanley Kowalski. In any case the first preview was only a week away.

And then, while she was out for a walk with her husband, Ferran got a text. It was from Frecknall, who had just had a success with *Cabaret* in the West End. Was Ferran free at the moment? Ferran thought the question was whether she was free for a drink that night, and texted that she was. No, came the reply, was she working? “She’s going to ask you to play Blanche DuBois,” joked her husband (whose privacy Ferran would like to maintain). They laughed at the ludicrousness of the idea.

She wasn’t laughing a few moments later when Frecknall phoned her. Wilson had had an injury. She had to pull out. Would Ferran step in? The run was already sold out. They could put the opening back, but only by five nights. It would give Ferran four days of rehearsals, before going on stage in one of the most celebrated roles in 20th-century theatre. It might have been five but Ferran had to return to an alien planet at the start of the following week for that last day’s filming (in a film whose name she says she also can’t divulge).

She spent a couple of hours talking it through with people. Then she called back.

“I said yes on the Tuesday. I was in rehearsals on the Wednesday and it was announced on the Thursday.”



Paul Mescal as Stanley and Patsy Ferran as Blanche in A Streetcar Named Desire at the Almeida Theatre in north London

Ferran, 33, has since tried to psychoanalyse herself. Why did she say yes? Did she want to be a bit of a hero? “It was a crazy thing to agree to. I think it was because of the challenge of seeing if I could learn anything in one week. It could have been any role. It happened to be Blanche DuBois.”

Since she is here, in a central London rehearsal studio, to tie in with the West End transfer – which is also largely sold out, give or take £10 day seats and £25 weekly lottery seats and some very expensive top-tier seats (we’ll come to those later) – you can guess that it was a happy ending. Mescal, who was nominated for a best actor Oscar during the run for his role in *Aftersun* (losing out on Sunday to Brendan Fraser in *The Whale*), grabbed the headlines. And indeed he was a highly effective, dauntingly macho Stanley. It is, though, more Blanche’s play than Stanley’s, and Ferran was simply sensational.

> “If I can play Blanche, I think anyone can

OK, those are the words from my Times review. I emerged from the show thinking I had never seen a *Streetcar* that felt so intimate, so contemporary. I wasn’t alone. “Unbelievably good,” Time Out said. “She makes every word blaze,” the Mail said, as Ferran reined in the expected southern airs and made something strikingly intelligent, fast-witted and resilient of a troubled character who has been played, in Britain alone this century, by Gillian Anderson, Glenn Close, Rachel Weisz and Maxine Peake. And all from four days’ rehearsal!

Ferran shows me the small leather binder she carried with her for the first week of shows. It has pages of the script pasted in, her lines highlighted in green (or, when a change of mood is required, orange). Some in the audience might have thought it was carrying a collection of Blanche’s dead husband’s love letters, she says, but after one week Frecknall decided it should go. The print is so small, anyway, that the two times she needed a prompt, she asked for it from the assistant stage manager. And there was no time to make her usual extensive notes on the script. Oh, except one. “Help me,” reads one scrawl in the margins. It’s not clear whether it’s Patsy or Blanche who is in trouble.

So, no fact-finding trips to New Orleans for Ferran, then. When she wasn’t rehearsing she was going through her lines, sometimes with her husband (also an actor, who insisted she not worry about the kiboshed honeymoon). Even when she was acting her part on this unspecified alien planet, Blanche’s lines were spinning through her head. (“I have always depended on the kindness of carbon-based life forms”?)

It’s an anxiety dream come true. Was any part of it a liberation, though? It’s a daunting role at the best of times. Here, though, at least she would have the excuse that it was the best she could do in the insufficient time allotted. “I think you’ve hit the nail on the head. I think I could only have done this part and this play in four days of rehearsal. Otherwise I would have had too much time to overthink it.

“The intensity of the process was a blessing in disguise, even though I thought I was going to lose my mind at some points. It was the closest I’ve ever been to a panic attack.” She only panicked when she was alone, though:

think it was the challenge'





Patsy Ferran in London this week. Right: with her Streetcar co-star Anjana Vasan, who plays Stella, at the Almeida opening night after-party in January

when she was with the company they kept it fun and supportive. Did anybody ever say, "Oh, Lydia didn't do it like that"? No, but a couple of bits of physical business that Wilson had come up with in rehearsals stayed in. Wilson has since been in touch. "I think it's important to respect her privacy, but she has been so supportive and encouraging. And when we do those moments it is like she is there on stage with us."

Despite these offstage dramas, though, in the public imagination this remained the Paul Mescal show. That lowered expectations. "Looking back, I think I'm relieved, selfishly, that all the focus was on him and not on me. I just like to do my job." Mostly, she says, any hoo-ha around him stayed away from the rehearsal room. "He's very normal. You never know you are in the presence of 'hot property'." Then, during the run, she watched *Aftersun*. She thought he was incredible in it, congratulated him when she got to the theatre that day. "Then, twice that night, on stage, this horrible intrusive thought came into my head where I just went, 'Oh my God, that's Paul Mescal!' I was fangirling! But he's got a sense of humour and humility with the whole thing that I am honestly in awe of." And the alpha-male energy that she finds "terrifying" when playing against is not to be seen offstage. "It's just his talent, because that's not who he is in real life."

And Blanche is not who the diminutive, disarmingly unassuming Ferran is in real life either. "I'm the opposite of how Blanche is usually portrayed. I didn't think I was the right casting. I had preconceived ideas of who Blanche DuBois was and I definitely don't own any of those qualities."

Which are? "Someone who sort of lives in the air, who uses her femininity and her sexuality to get what she wants. I think I have those qualities, but in less conventional ways." She also worried she was too young for the role: she's 33 but looks younger. After all, she points out, she got away with playing a 16-year-old in the play *Camp Siegfried* at the Old Vic in 2021.

"So if I can play Blanche I think anyone can. There might be people who miss the Vivien Leighness of it all, but this job has solidified that, for me, if you just bring yourself to any role you can do it."

She doesn't like heightened expectations, but ticket prices for this run reach as high as £300. Hard, at £300, not to hope for big things. She admits she's not entirely comfortable with those sorts of prices. "I think theatre should be accessible. And if tickets get to a certain price that only a very, very small amount of people can have access to, it gets to be problematic." The counter-argument often proffered by West End producers is that the top prices subsidise the cheaper seats. "If that's the case then go for it. It's not something I grew up with. But then it's not unique to *Streetcar*. The last couple of years theatre prices have reached a point that is shocking to me, but maybe I should just get used to it."

Ferran was born in Valencia, the middle child of Spanish parents. Her father's work for a drinks company led to them moving around in her childhood (Southampton, Amsterdam) before settling in Surrey when she was ten. Spanish is the language spoken at home, but it's not her first language. She hardly spoke till she was four, she says, and after that always went to British schools. Her secondary school was the independent Notre Dame in Cobham, where her first big role was playing Shylock in *The Merchant of Venice* aged 15. After that she studied drama at the University of Birmingham before going to Rada.

She graduated in 2014. Her first professional job came the same year, making the most of her role as a maid in a West End revival of Noël Coward's *Blithe Spirit* with Angela Lansbury. She has fond memories of the Sunday the cast went round to Lansbury's: the former TV sleuth cooked them a roast dinner and then they all watched an episode of *Vera* together.

The stage work has kept coming: at the National, the RSC, the Royal Court, the West End. She has worked on screen too, including the TV series *Life After Life*, *Black Narcissus* and *Jamestown*, and the films *Mothering Sunday* and *Living*. It all helps keep her solvent. And she's good at saving. "I'm overly sensible about everything," she says, sheepishly, in arguably her single least Blanche DuBois-like statement.

She's aware that the success of *Streetcar* has raised her profile, but the big Hollywood offers haven't arrived quite yet. In any case she thinks stage is where she burns brightest. "Paul, I think, has a God-given talent for both stage and screen. But whereas I've learnt to love filming, on stage there is a comfort there for me. It's not something I think about. I just do it."

***A Streetcar Named Desire* is at the Phoenix Theatre, London WC2, March 20 to May 6, streetcarwestend.com**

> "Her face somehow reflected the torment of the past



Rachel Weisz as Blanche DuBois in a production at the Donmar Warehouse in 2009

Of the five I've seen, this Blanche wowed

Is there such a being as a definitive Blanche DuBois? Surely not, since she's the most complex creation of the very complex Tennessee Williams. Indeed, in many ways she is him. After all, he was an ultra-sensitive exile from a South he saw as an Eden scarred by ugliness and brutality, a gay man in mourning for lost beauty yet addicted to the roughest of rough trade. And those contradictory loves, fears and hates are embodied in Blanche, making her as tantalising a challenge for an actress as the theatre offers.

So who has most succeeded in the role? Or rather, who has best played the Southern belle who has escaped a genteel life and the gay husband who killed himself, found solace in promiscuity and landed up impoverished in the grotty flat her sister shares with her redneck husband? I've seen five Blanches, starting with a fragile Vivien Leigh in the 1951 screen version and continuing with Claire Bloom, undeniably aristocratic yet frighteningly needy on stage in 1974.

Then came Jessica Lange, attacked as lacking depth when she appeared on Broadway in 1992 but praised for her blend of intelligence, vulnerability and grief when she reprised the role in London in 1996. Glenn Close, Blanche at the National in 2002, found yet more in the part. I still remember feeling I was seeing some exotic moth lost in the monkey house when she entered in an improbably trim white suit. And she went on to give us a soul who could variously be arch, coy and embarrassingly flirtatious but had moments of wry humour, defensive rage and eventually a wincing, palpitating desperation that left us too emotionally flattened.

How much is Blanche the victim of circumstance, how much self-destructive and responsible for her fate? How much repulsion, how much attraction does she feel for her sexy, hostile brother-in-law? Almost more than Close, Rachel Weisz found the right balance in 2009. She entered so exhausted her face seemed more ashen than her pure-white dress, yet brought out the pluck, resilience and instinct for survival that had kept her precariously afloat. That combined with a yearning for love, a feeling for beauty, and a natural warmth and even radiance. And Weisz's face somehow reflected the torment of the past and the stress of a present that finally, movingly, horribly breaks Blanche. For all her pretension and selfishness, this was a bright light flickering but wasted in a dark world — what actress could suggest more?

Benedict Nightingale

The writer was chief theatre critic of The Times from 1990 to 2010

film

‘She’s so mean’: the critic directors loved to hate



Quentin Tarantino is making his tenth and final film, which is said to be based on the famously acerbic New Yorker critic Pauline Kael. By Ed Potton

Quentin Tarantino’s long goodbye to directing looks to have a grand finale. According to The Hollywood Reporter, his tenth — and, he has said, last — film has the working title *The Movie Critic* and will be set in late Seventies Los Angeles, built around a character based on Pauline Kael, whose vivid and often excoriating reviews for The New Yorker set the industry agenda from 1968 to 1991. Tarantino is a fully paid-up fan of Kael and you can see why. Like him she was enthusiastic, obsessive and knowledgeable — and like him she relished spilling blood. Tarantino has called Kael’s criticism “the greatest shit ever — she’s just being so f***ing mean!”

Roger Ebert may have had greater name recognition as a critic, being on TV, but Kael, who died in 2001, made him look like a kindly uncle. “I know that some of my reviews have sent people to bed for two weeks,” she said. Her hounding of Clint Eastwood was merciless, her “vicious” assessment of *Blade Runner* convinced Ridley Scott never to read another review and her decimation of *Ryan’s Daughter* was instrumental in its august director, David Lean, not working for 14 years. “It had an awful effect on one,” Lean said of the mauling, some of which Kael delivered in person at a lunch in New York. “It shakes one’s confidence, terribly.” Kael’s aversion to auteur theory and suggestion that the true author of *Citizen Kane* was its co-writer, Herman J Mankiewicz, deeply wounded its director, Orson Welles, who was used to being trumpeted as a lone genius. Among the other sacred cows she slaughtered were *Lawrence of Arabia*, *It’s a Wonderful Life*, *The Sound of Music* and *2001: A Space Odyssey*.

Right: Pauline Kael. Below: Quentin Tarantino and his wife, Daniella Pick, at the UK premiere of Once Upon a Time… in Hollywood



Ebert was a fan, saying that “like George Bernard Shaw, she wrote reviews that will be read for their style, humour and energy long after some of their subjects have been forgotten”, while the actor and comedian Jerry Lewis nailed the mix of fear and respect in which she was held when he muttered: “She’s never said a good thing about me yet, that dirty old broad. But she’s probably the most qualified film critic in the world.”

Just as Kael panned films other critics loved, she championed ones they ignored. “I always go wanting it to be good because then I’ll have something new to say,” as she once put it. She threw her weight behind *Last Tango in Paris*, Robert Altman’s *Nashville* and *McCabe & Mrs Miller*, and, perhaps most famously, *Bonnie and Clyde*.

Reviewers had been confused by its mixture of comedy and carnage but Kael helped to put it at the vanguard of the New Hollywood movement. Her essay on *Bonnie and Clyde* was turned down by The New Republic but snapped up by The New Yorker, which would become her home for more than 20 years.

In *What She Said*, a 2018 documentary about Kael, the Oscar-winning screenwriter Robert Towne said her assessment of *Bonnie and Clyde*, on which he worked, “changed the face of reviewing”. With New Hollywood came new criticism — direct, personal, alive to sex and violence. Kael distanced herself from the “term-paper pomposity that you learn at college” and which most critics before her and many since failed to jettison. Too many reviewers “don’t start with their kid’s sense of, ‘That stinks!’ ” she thought, while “the more educated I got the more willing I was to write like a kid”. She preferred the word “movie” to “film”, which she thought could be pretentious, and insisted that “movies are not that deep a medium … the greatest movies ever made can be understood in one seeing”.

“As well as a great and insightful film critic, she was also a great critic of film critics,” says the film writer John Bleasdale. “Some of her best zingers were aimed at her colleagues and rivals, like Bosley Crowther at The New York Times, whom she trashed constantly. She never met a fight she didn’t love.” A favourite target was Andrew Sarris, a big proponent of auteur theory. His wife, Molly Haskell, also a film critic, says in the documentary that Kael “attacked him in a very personal and almost slanderous way … No male critic had as much testosterone as Pauline”.

Kael’s deadly panache attracted a gang of young male acolytes who were dubbed “the Paulettes”, and distributors started putting on individual screenings to stop her influencing colleagues. In 1979 Warren Beatty, the star and producer of *Bonnie and Clyde*, invited her to

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“We grew up with her as our kind of film Kerouac

Take cover! Pauline Kael’s best lines

The Sound of Music, *below* 1965
“[It’s] the sugar-coated lie that people seem to want to eat … and this is the attitude that makes a critic feel that maybe it’s all hopeless. Why not just send the director, Robert Wise, a wire: ‘You win, I give up’?”

Bonnie and Clyde 1967
“People in the audience at *Bonnie and Clyde* are laughing, demonstrating that they’re not stooges — that they appreciate the joke — when they catch the first bullet right in the face. The movie keeps them off balance to the end.”



2001: A Space Odyssey 1968
“Probably the most gloriously redundant plot of all time.”

Dirty Harry 1971
“The action genre has always had a fascist potential, and it has finally surfaced.”

The Godfather Part 2 1974
“It’s as if the movie satisfied an impossible yet basic human desire to see what our parents were like before we were born and to see what they did that affected what we became.”

One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest 1975
“[Milos] Forman is an intelligent, tentative director — which is another way of saying that his virtues are largely negative.”

Nashville 1975
“Is there such a thing as an orgy for movie-lovers — but an orgy without excess? … It’s a pure emotional high, and you don’t come down when the picture is over; you take it with you.”

Hannah and Her Sisters 1986
“[Woody Allen] uses style to blot out the rest of New York City. It’s a form of repression, and, from the look of the movie, repression is what’s romantic to him.”

Angel Heart 1987
“Alan Parker has technique to burn in *Angel Heart*, and that’s what he should do with it.”

On being a critic
“To be paid for thinking … I can’t think of any better way to live.”

work as a consultant at Paramount, but she returned to criticism after a few months.

At the other end of the scale was Eastwood, who got his own back on Kael in the last Dirty Harry film, *The Dead Pool*, in which a female film critic is brutally killed. And Renata Adler, a colleague of Kael’s at The New Yorker, who dismissed her 1980 collection, *When the Lights Go Down*, as “jarringly, piece by piece, line by line, and without interruption, worthless”. The office Christmas party must have been fun that year.

Kael was pungently opinionated and everyone in turn had an opinion on her: actors, directors, other critics, moviegoers. Tarantino has been all of those things, which may be another reason why he loves her. He and other directors such as David O Russell and Wes Anderson “grew up with her as our kind of film Kerouac”, he has said. Tarantino’s recent book of criticism, *Cinema Speculation*, nods to her status, with more than one sentence starting, “Even Pauline Kael …”

It helped that he dodged the slash of her pen, having released his first film, *Reservoir Dogs*, in 1992, the year after she retired from reviewing. His snippy responses to criticism of his last film, *Once Upon a Time … in Hollywood*, suggest that he wouldn’t have coped well with a Kael broadside — who did? — although building his farewell film around a woman can be seen as a canny response to the accusations of misogyny that have dogged him.

Kael wasn’t unimpeachable herself, flirting with what today might be cancellation after a review of George Cukor’s *Rich and Famous* was seen to equate homosexuality with promiscuity. “She was fairly ropey on race and women,” Bleasdale says. “Though very near to her time. She saw rape as a fantasy and said that Laurence Olivier was better at playing Othello than a black actor would be.”

Born in California to a family of Jewish-Polish chicken farmers, Kael studied at the University of California, Berkeley, and in 1948 had a daughter, Gina, with the film-maker James Broughton, raising her alone before a brief marriage to Edward Landberg, with whom she ran an arthouse cinema in California. Prior to joining The New Yorker she wrote reviews for the women’s magazine McCall’s, but was fired after trashing a series of big movies including *The Sound of Music* and *Dr Zhivago*.

Details are scarce on Tarantino’s film, which begins production in the autumn, although Twitter is already full of suggestions for actresses to play Kael: Cate Blanchett, Andrea Riseborough, Olivia Colman, Lesley Manville. It’s a complex role that needs someone of their calibre: ruthless yet humane, fiery but contained. There is a clip on YouTube of Kael on Dick Cavett’s chat show — she has the sharpest of tongues but the voice and demeanour of a librarian.

Yet her writing crackled with sensuality. “How can you love movies and not be sensual?” she said. “That’s one of the reasons we prefer movies to other art forms when we’re kids. A play doesn’t bring the people as close.” Some made fun of the sexual titles of her books — *Kiss Kiss Bang Bang*, *When the Lights Go Down* — but they were very deliberate.

“Educated people want to fight that direct response,” Kael said. “They don’t seem to realise it’s one of the greatest things we have available.”

podcasts

Celebrity interviews plumb new depths with Tom Daley



By James Marriott

podcasts

Made with Love
★☆☆☆☆

In diver turned media personality Tom Daley, podcasting finds its most insipid celebrity interviewer yet. Daley begins by explaining that his new show, *Made with Love*, derives from his love of knitting. “Knitting,” he says, “is a huge part of my life.” He says that his “passion” for knitting is so intense that it inspired him to talk to other people about their passions. As podcast premises go this is lamentably tenuous.

His first guest is “global icon Shania Twain”. Daley says that Twain’s singing career “impressed me much” and then issues a pleased little “ha!” at this, the show’s first and only witticism. Already the listener recognises that they are in for a very long 45 minutes.

Daley says that Twain is “just incredible” and has a talent for “breaking down boundaries”. Of Twain’s new album, he says “it is like a warm hug” and “all I can say is wow”. “You have no idea how excited I am to have the actual Shania Twain on my podcast,” he adds. In fact, you feel you have rather too good an idea of how excited he is.

His first question to Twain is, “How are you doing?” Then he wants to know what the inspiration behind her new album was. Even Twain seems to flounder in the face of such vacuous inquiry.



Vacuous inquiry: Tom Daley

She manages to provide Daley with some platitudes about how she wanted to make people feel happy. This is right up his street. He agrees that “the lyrics are so empowering and relatable” and adds, more puzzlingly, that they “speak to so many demographics”. It is all a flattering reminder that journalism does require at least some skill.

“I was just blown away by the woman that you are and how strong you are,” he continues. This isn’t really a question but never mind. He gropes around for a bit before settling on: “When did people start recognising you had an amazing voice?” This, I think, qualifies as a car crash interview. Not for the guest but for the interviewer. A warm, huggy, lovey, accepting car crash.

Almost as bad is the interview with Greta Thunberg, who is quizzed almost as much on her love of knitting as she is on the climate crisis. “Wow,” Daley comments on learning of Thunberg’s love of crochet, “what kind of things do you knit with?”

For Daley this counts as hardball. “Obviously there’s wool and there’s cotton and there’s acrylic and there’s hemp,” Thunberg says, “it depends what colour it is.” Daley agrees that “colour is very important”. At this point I slipped into a coma.

There has been some speculation that the podcast bubble is on the point of bursting, that the market is oversaturated. Anybody who listens to *Made with Love* will surely cry, “Burst it already!” Too many famous people have been given shows to witter on indulgently at one another. But Daley’s show is surely the nadir — the essence of the vacant, unchallenging, untalented celebrity interviewer.

Richard Morrison the arts column

Will musicians have the courage and resources to snub the Proms?

Though eclipsed over the weekend by the Gary Lineker furore, the row over the axing of the BBC Singers, Britain's only full-time professional choir, and 20 per cent of the musicians in the BBC's English orchestras has not just rumbled on but intensified. This has turned into a terrible month for the BBC. However, if I were one of its self-serving bunch of overpaid executives I would be more worried about what the summer holds.

Signing letters of protest, or the Save the BBC Singers petition, is all very well. And the fact that hundreds of distinguished conductors, composers and soloists from across the world have put their names to the letters, while more than 117,000 music lovers have signed the petition, is testimony to the strength of feeling about the cuts.

The trouble is, letters and petitions can be ignored. Outrage fades. The news cycle moves on. Those letters are written on the assumption that top BBC managers care about what the classical music world thinks, whereas all the evidence suggests they don't give a flying fig.

You only have to read the jaw-dropping letter sent by the BBC Singers' co-directors to the BBC's chairman (and leaked to the slippedisc.com website) to realise how little BBC executives care about their classical musicians. It revealed that decisions to axe the BBC Singers were made by people who had hardly attended a choral concert in their lives, on the basis of a "classical review" compiled by someone who spoke to just two people about the British choral industry, one of them a child. Consultation was minimal. The musicians were treated not just discourteously but insultingly.

This is the mindset of today's BBC execs. They wear their ignorance of, and indifference to, classical music like a badge of honour. It's a trivial thing, I suppose, but a news story on the BBC news website this week seemed to epitomise this. It was headlined "Dorset farmer to conduct at King's coronation". The Dorset farmer was Sir John Eliot Gardiner, internationally renowned conductor with 250 recordings to his name. One wonders whether, outside Radio 3, anyone at the BBC has heard of him.

ALAMY



The Proms, the classical music event the BBC really cares about

It's mad to hope that this present crop of BBC executives will suddenly see the value of classical music and reverse their announced cuts. That's why I say that the summer will be when this battle is won or lost. Why? Because among my musician friends there's a growing belief that the only weapon they have in their armoury — the only way they can discomfort the BBC sufficiently to save the BBC Singers and those orchestral jobs — is to threaten a boycott of the BBC Proms: the one classical music event that even Lorna Clarke, the BBC's pop-fixated head of music, might have attended.

As those of us of a certain age will recall, a Proms boycott has happened before, and in similar circumstances. The BBC threatened an enormous cull of 172 musicians in 1980. Musicians united in protest, and the first 20 concerts of the Proms didn't happen. The BBC still pushed through many redundancies, but at least one leading orchestra, the BBC Scottish, was saved from extinction.

To make a similar impact today, all those eminent musicians who signed the protest letters would have to turn fine words into tough deeds, sacrifice their own engagement fees and declare a universal boycott of the Proms, or some of them. And that announcement would have to happen now, or very soon. By the time the Proms actually start, in mid-July, the BBC Singers will have been axed, if the timetable planned by BBC management is allowed to proceed.

I wonder, though, whether the classical music world has the resolve and unity to take this bold step. Unlike Lineker and his football pundit chums, most musicians desperately need the money from every contracted engagement they can get: even a short-term strike would be painful for their families. That's one consideration, but another is a different sort of insecurity. If you are told over and over again that classical music is "irrelevant", "elitist" and "out of touch", maybe you start to believe it yourself.

> **“Among my musician friends there's a growing belief of the need to threaten a boycott of the BBC**

Evidence? This week I received an email from an outstanding, highly intelligent young British singer who confided — under terms of strict anonymity — that every singer he talks to believes, privately, that English National Opera (also under threat of being defunded) "does substandard work in an inappropriate venue at scandalous cost to the taxpayer", while the BBC Singers might be very good at singing the avant-garde music of Gyorgy Ligeti, "but who wants to hear Ligeti?"

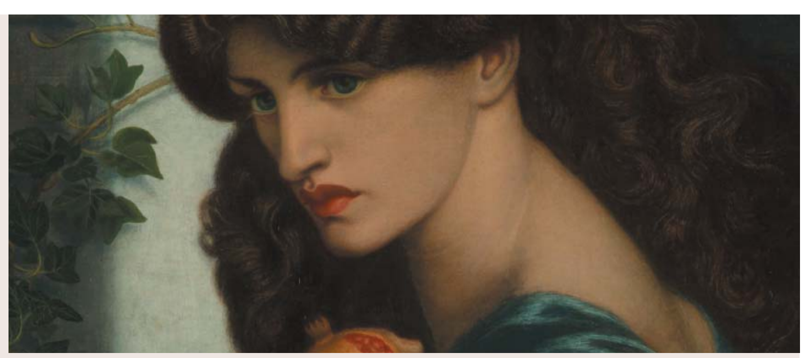
For decades, he continued, the classical music world has "gone down rabbit holes of inaccessible repertoire and outdated formats". He wants the profession to have "an honest discussion with itself" about how to give the public what it really wants, rather than always expecting subsidy to continue as before.

He's right to this extent: there's a younger generation of classical musicians coming up who do passionately want to see their art form enjoyed by far more people of all classes and ages, and are frustrated when the organisations for which they work seem stuck in outmoded mindsets, or are simply badly run. The trouble is, having that "honest discussion" right now plays into the hands of the executives running the BBC and Arts Council England, who seem determined to kill off as much of the classical music infrastructure as they can get away with. It would end up with classical musicians wasting time and energy arguing with each other (as so often happens) rather than standing together and confronting an existential threat.

The BBC has imposed its music cuts brutally and with scant regard for standards of decency in public life. If musicians decided to boycott the Proms in response, I would be neither surprised nor critical. It would be a passionate and principled response. Whether it would change very much is another matter.

Tate Britain tickets for just £11

Times+ members can get £11 tickets to *The Rossettis* exhibition until midnight on April 5. It's set to thrill pre-Raphaelite enthusiasts and will be running from April 6 until September 24 at Tate Britain.



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T&Cs apply. *Dante Gabriel Rossetti Proserpine 1874 © Tate.*

THE CRITICS

Will Hodgkinson returns to a stripped-down U2 p11
Debra Craine sees a reborn Rite of Spring p12
Carol Midgley hails Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe p15

A life-affirming film that dies at the end

the big film

Jennifer Saunders wows in a movie of Alan Bennett's play. Shame about the last act, says Kevin Maher

PATHE UK



Jennifer Saunders delivers a career-high performance as the no-nonsense ward nurse Sister Gilpin

The guts of Alan Bennett's boisterous and witty 2018 play *Allelujah!* mostly survive, minus the musical numbers, in this initially successful movie adaptation about a fictional Yorkshire hospital and its eccentric geriatric patients. It's directed by Richard Eyre (*Notes on a Scandal*) and written by *Call the Midwife* showrunner Heidi Thomas, her second film screenplay, and her first since *I Capture the Castle* 20 years ago.

The story is based in and around the Bethlehem, nicknamed "the Beth", which is quickly revealed to be a vital, caring local institution that has nonetheless been deemed "a model for closure" by the visiting managerial consultant and Tory government adviser Colin Colman (Russell Tovey).

"Geriatrics make zero economic sense" and "people voted this government in" are two of Colman's defining lines (not in the original play), and they represent the views of an icy metropolitan elitist who just might, by the end of the movie, be transformed by the kindness and altruism he witnesses every day at the Beth.

It helps, with the kind of contrivance normally reserved for Hollywood melodramas, that Colman's crotchety father, Joe (David Bradley), is a patient at the Beth, thus allowing our baby-faced antihero a chance to experience the heroics of the NHS in the most intimate way. Step forward Jennifer Saunders as the ruthlessly efficient Sister Gilpin, a no-nonsense ward nurse who sums up her advice for the elderly as: "Don't leave it too late to die." Saunders delivers a career-high performance (easily her best "straight" role) that requires a delicate balance between the firing out of Bennett's deadpan bon mots, the projection of innate yet essentially warm-hearted authority and the suggestion of something much more elemental.

She burdens a late line of hers, for example, with tantalising double meaning, and inherent self-loathing, when she says: "We do the things that have had to be done since the world was young."

Gilpin serves as the film's de facto guide, flitting daily between a patient list of British screen stalwarts, including Derek Jacobi as the bumptious former schoolteacher Ambrose and Judi Dench as Mary, a former librarian charged with filming the backstage theatrics at the Beth on an iPad in the hope that the footage will help to fuel the latest local anti-closure campaign.

The iPad, it transpires, has a Chekhovian function that will eventually, in the third act, pay dramatic dividends. Julia McKenzie similarly plays a dementia patient whose disquieting cries concerning the dishonesty of her scheming, thieving children lays the thematic groundwork for a genuinely stunning final-act revelation.

It is a breathtaking twist ripped from real-life news headlines, and one which boldly inverts the meaning of so many of the drama's earlier stand-out exchanges. It might, in fact, have been the audacious topper to a five-star movie experience had the film not suddenly succumbed to the worst possible proselytising instincts at the most inopportune moment.

Yes, directly after the aforementioned twist, and just when the movie feels as though it's in full Hitchcockian flow (references to *Notorious* abound), the screenplay performs a maddening closing lurch that allows the kindly physician Dr Valentine (Bally Gill) to address the camera and deliver the kind of saccharine, virtue-signalling NHS-themed panegyric that feels as if it might have been whipped up by some malfunctioning Labour Party apparatchiks midway through conference season. "The NHS is the best idea this country ever had," it begins.

It's howlingly awful, and a complete betrayal of Bennett — none of it is from the play. It's also, more importantly, an insult to the intelligence and compassion of the audience, who clearly know that the NHS needs protecting. Chances are, if you're already going to a Bennett film adaptation you're probably the type of person who doesn't need a sanctimonious smack in the face on the way out.

It's one of the worst closing five minutes of a movie since they revealed that Kevin Spacey was actually his own killer in *The Life of David Gale*, or since that corny psychiatrist overexplained every single plot point in *Psycho*, starting with: "Norman Bates no longer exists!"

Best possible solution? The very second Dr Valentine turns and says the words "The NHS…", just run. Straight out the doors. You'll have witnessed a tightly played, witty, funny and provocative drama, with one of the year's best twists. What more could you want? Besides an ending?

In cinemas

Allelujah
12A, 99min
★★★☆☆

---

classic film of the week

The Age of Innocence
(1993)
★★★★★

Martin Scorsese's most uncharacteristic film is also one of his finest. A visually sumptuous Edith Wharton adaptation set among the snobbish elites of late 19th-century New York society, it positively pulses with the frustrated tension and unspoken sadness of its lead characters and star-crossed paramours, the respectable lawyer Newland Archer (Daniel Day-Lewis) and scandal-plagued Ellen Olenska (Michelle Pfeiffer).



Winona Ryder and Daniel Day-Lewis in Martin Scorsese's masterpiece

The chemistry between the pair is electrifying, while Scorsese's fascination with the "tribal order" of Manhattan's wealthiest families never relents. Winona Ryder also stars as virginal May Welland. Joanne Woodward's narration is soothing not folksy, while the closing scene, a portrait of poignancy and regret, remains one of Scorsese's strongest endings, and the only one to make you weep. A bona fide masterpiece.

In cinemas

film reviews



All very bleurgh: Zachary Levi as Shazam

If only the dragon had got him

The vacuous sequel reminds us of the need to kill off naff characters, says Kevin Maher

Shazam! Fury of the Gods
12A, 120min
★☆☆☆☆

I miss *Bambi*. I miss *The Lion King*. I miss Butch and Sundance. I miss mainstream Hollywood movies where the death of key characters is final and wounding. Nobody really dies any more in a big-budget studio product. They just lazily, annoyingly, reincarnate. Superman did it in *Justice League*. Obliterated Professor X was back again in *Days of Future Past*. And half the Marvel pantheon died in *Infinity War* only to return, fighting fit, in *Endgame*. It's all very bleurgh.

And so, at the climax of this vacuous and disappointing sequel, when a key character, sigh, "dies", we know instinctively that they'll be back before the credits roll. And typically, depressingly, they are. The tedious reincarnation trope is, however, the least of the narrative misfires in a film that borrows its central dramatic device from *The Simpsons Movie*. Yep, here Philadelphia is imprisoned beneath a giant transparent energy dome that's exactly the same, and has the same storytelling implications, as the giant glass dome that covered Springfield in 2007. This dome, however, has been created by three super-witch sisters called the daughters of Atlas, played by the supremely bored-looking Helen Mirren, Lucy Liu and Rachel Zegler. Their characters are seeking, in a comic book plot that must have been written by an app, a doomsday weapon called the "Seed of the Tree of Life" that has the power to, yes, destroy the Earth.

Standing in their way is Shazam (Zachary Levi) and his five nerdy foster home buddies. But when they say the magic word "Shazam!" they become sexy, ripped, bulging, confident, outward-looking hotties (played by a different cast line-up — all sex bombs). This might be some genius satirical commentary on beauty fascism in modern blockbusters, but in a drama this dumb and unaware the buffed-up makeover seems like an insult to the same "inadequate" outsiders and weedy minorities the film pretends to champion. You have time to think about these things when a movie is almost completely devoid of engagement.
In cinemas

Rye Lane
15, 82min
★★★★☆

Immediately one of the great "London" movies, up there with *Wonderland*, *My Beautiful Laundrette* and *Notting Hill*, this feature debut from Raine Allen-Miller is a rom-com where the love is all around, literally — the streets of Peckham have never looked this swoon-worthy on film.

Allen-Miller clearly knows her rom-coms, and tells a deftly constructed story of two separately jilted lovers, Dom (David Jonsson) and Yas (Vivian Oparah), who enjoy a wacky opening meet-cute in a unisex toilet and spend the rest of the movie on an impromptu date, circling each other warily but falling inevitably.

A cameo role from rom-com royalty reinforces the genre heritage. It's a frothy metropolitan comedy with some heyday Richard Curtis energy and a deep affection for its well-crafted and smartly performed characters, with Jonsson and Oparah an especially adorable pairing. The only problem? At 82 minutes, it's almost too short. A rare complaint.
In cinemas

Boston Strangler
112min
★★★☆☆



This true-life crime drama has almost everything you could want from a sharp revisionist thriller. It's the story of the 1960s serial killer the Boston Strangler told through the eyes of ace reporters Jean Cole and Loretta McLaughlin (Carrie Coon and Keira Knightley, *above*).

It's a feminist take on a story whose original movie form, the 1968 Tony Curtis vehicle, cruised dangerously close to glorifying the killer. This version is rooted in serious crime reportage and the challenges faced by our protagonists in an all-male professional environment. Like *She Said,* it depicts the unglamorous grunt work of journalism. It explores the famous "multiple killers" theory. It's produced by Ridley Scott. It looks astounding, with inky noir frames and a cold blue sheen throughout. It's only missing one key ingredient. Dramatic tension. For an impeccably stylish film about murder, it's strangely flat. Which is not great.
Disney+

Pearl
15, 102min
★★☆☆☆

There's a single interesting idea in this ho-hum horror effort. It's that the film, though firmly horror in genre and content, unfolds as a brightly lit, vividly colourful, classic era Hollywood melodrama — say, *All That Heaven Allows* or *Written on the Wind.*

The titles are vivid, the soundtrack is filled with soaring strings, and the central performance from Mia Goth, as the early 20th-century Texas farm girl Pearl, is a caricature of breathy, over-enunciated optimism and joy. Until the killing starts. And that's it. That's the idea. Pearl is unhinged from the beginning, with obvious murderous instincts (she kills farm animals), and is easily nudged into homicidal mania when her stern German mother berates her for her "foolish" ways.

She slashes, stabs and decapitates aplenty, and proves a dab hand with a pitchfork. That's essentially the film. It's Judy Garland goes rogue on a farm.
In cinemas



Mia Goth's Pearl: unhinged from the beginning

80 for Brady
12, 98min
★★☆☆☆

Somewhere in this garish long-form NFL promotional video sits a familiar movie format about a group of close-knit oldies making that "one final gesture" that brings extra meaning to life.

Here the screen legends Jane Fonda, Lily Tomlin, Sally Field and Rita Moreno are the geriatrics whose love for the NFL, and star player Tom Brady, pushes them into an impulsive trip to the 2017 Super Bowl between the New England Patriots and the Atlanta Falcons.

The film, alas, is wall-to-wall product placement, with NFL sequences, NFL players (Rob Gronkowski, anyone?) and NFL locations swamping the threadbare narrative. Our foursome even drag the drama on a diversion to "enjoy" the branded historical "NFL Experience" in a Houston convention centre.

The characters are barely there. Fonda's the sex-positive one, Field the boring one, Moreno grieving, and Tomlin dying. It's irrelevant, though. Come for the movie, stay for the NFL.
In cinemas on Sunday only, then general release on March 24

The one where the streets (still) have no name

Bono and band rework their back catalogue and star in a new film, says Will Hodgkinson

There is plenty to find annoying about U2. The self-importance, the grandiosity, the world-saving tendencies of Bono and, most of all, the overriding suspicion that the people benefiting most from U2's largesse are U2 themselves. Put all this to one side and, to quote a career-reinventing album title by George Michael, listen without prejudice and it is hard not to be moved by the grace, depth and ambition of U2 at their best.

Songs of Surrender was conceived initially as an accompaniment to Bono's 2022 memoir, *Surrender*, but in typical U2 fashion it took on a life of its own and has become a vast 40-song reworking of material spanning their entire career. What really hits home, for a band whose breakthrough album, *Boy*, was released 43 years ago, is the sense of the reworked music reflecting the inevitable ravages of age, and the greater degree of reflection that brings.

Where the Streets Have No Name is a song of hope, of escaping the restrictions applied to someone by the place they grew up in. This new version, which consists of just Bono's voice against a bed of reverberating synths, suggests implicitly that we can never escape ourselves, and acceptance of that equates to some kind of wisdom. *Every Breaking Wave*, from 2014's iPhone-invading album disaster *Songs of Innocence*, eschews the chugging arena rock of the original for simple restrained piano. It ends up being a lot more affecting as a result.


OLAF HEINE

pop

U2
Songs of Surrender
(Universal)
★★★★☆

Bono & The Edge: A Sort of Homecoming with David Letterman
(Disney+)
★★★☆☆

It is surprising, even discombobulating, to hear such modest versions of songs known for their bombastic sense of scale. *Pride (In the Name of Love)* is Bono's 1984 tribute to Martin Luther King Jr and exactly the kind of thing that made U2 the ultimate punch-the-air Eighties rock band in the first place. On this rendition a simple strummed guitar accompanies altered lyrics about the refugee crisis and the human cost at the heart of it. "One boy washed up on an empty beach/ One boy will never be kissed," Bono sings. It is hard not to be affected by it.

For those of us who struggled with U2's desire to be the biggest band in the world, and even more so with their tendency (since copied by Coldplay) to emulate modern trends that didn't suit them, these more intimate versions feel more natural, less forced. They also shine a light on the songwriting craft at the heart of it all, alongside Bono's desire, whether successful or not, to accompany rock stardom with a sense of moral obligation. *Walk On*, originally from 2000, is stripped of the now-dated production of the original, which was written about the Burmese political prisoner Aung San Suu Kyi. This time round the song is for the people of Ukraine, the message being that love is the one thing you can take with you when all else is lost. The minimalism of the arrangement suits the theme.

You do wonder whether the bassist Adam Clayton and the drummer Larry Mullen Jr were told to go off and have a game of Scrabble while Bono and The Edge got on with it, because much of the time there is no rhythm section at all. And when they do come in, U2 sound more like a good-time bar band than a stadium spectacular, from the chugging funk of *Desire* to the loose, rattling rock of *Get Out of Your Own Way*. None of this will propel them back to being the biggest band in the world. That modesty — a word I never thought I would write in relation to U2 — is exactly what makes *Songs of Surrender* a gentle, rather moving reinvention.

As if a 40-song reworking of their back catalogue weren't enough, along comes **Bono & The Edge: A Sort of Homecoming with David Letterman**, a St Patrick's Day-timed trip down memory lane for two of U2's band members on Disney+. The former chat show host Letterman does a tour of Dublin with its most famous rock duo, going to the pubs and taking selfies with fans, before an intimate performance by Bono and The Edge at the city's Ambassador Theatre.

There are moments of revelation, such as The Edge describing how *Sunday Bloody Sunday* came out of not just his rage at the futility of the Troubles but also the struggle he felt at reconciling a Christian faith with the frivolous goal of being in a rock'n'roll band. The friendship forms the film's emotional bedrock — at one point Bono wells up as he says The Edge is his best friend because he can always argue with him — and Letterman proves a genial host, unafraid of a bit of gentle mockery. In the main, though, this is one for the U2 megafans.

This singer refuses to skimp on Strauss

classical

Rachel Willis-Sorensen
Strauss
Sony Classical
★★★★☆

Various artists
Compositrices
Bru Zane
★★★★☆

An album lasting just 45 minutes wouldn't normally be in line for an award for a record company's generosity. But when the music contained consists of Strauss's *Four Last Songs* and the last scene of his opera *Capriccio*, an exception must be made. This is music so lusciously and richly textured, so moving and memorable, that no one, weighing up the notes, should ever come away feeling short-changed.

The singer, of course, does make a difference. Here, too, nothing is skimped. Indeed the volume and dark tones of the American Rachel Willis-Sorensen's soprano rather startle at first: we're a long way from the silvery gleam that Elisabeth Schwarzkopf and others have projected in famous *Four Last Songs* of the past. Willis-Sorensen's confidence as she manoeuvres her voice over this autumnal masterpiece's singular leaps and high-flying glides often produces thrilling results, despite a few moments when a pinnacle's approach briefly resembles the climb up a greasy pole. She is winning too in the more conversational tones needed for the *Capriccio* finale.

No quibbles are possible over the sounds of the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra conducted by Andris Nelsons — someone, the singer says, who "utterly transcends this mortal coil" whenever he conducts Strauss. There's not, I think, documentary evidence of this, but listening to the orchestra's succulent tone and curvaceous phrasings, it's easy to see what she means.

We hop over briefly to a box set with a running time of ten hours and nine minutes. *Compositrices* is subtitled *New Light on French Romantic Women Composers*, and I've really enjoyed wading through fascinating repertoire from 19th and early 20th-century composers mostly little known (Mel Bonis? Charlotte Sohy?), delivered with gusto by a range of French singers, pianists and string players, as well as four orchestras.

Given the cultural climate and life's circumstances, music in smaller forms tends to dominate, though each disc includes at least one bigger splash, from Nadia Boulanger's rather frightening cantata *La sirène* to Cécile Chaminade's hugely appealing ballet suite *Callirhoé*. One divergence from Bru Zane's usual excellent presentations is the absence of texts for the vocal works. In every other respect: thumbs up.
Geoff Brown

Miley Cyrus
Endless Summer Vacation
Sony
★★☆☆☆



Since announcing the end of her former career as a child star by swinging naked on an object of industrial destruction in the video to 2013's *Wrecking Ball*, Miley Cyrus has proven herself to be a superb pop star: fun, provocative, great with a smash hit. However, none of this works towards classic album material. The ubiquitous bittersweet disco anthem *Flowers* is fantastic, as is the Giorgio Moroder-like future dancefloor favourite *River*. The rest of the album is standard-issue country/heartland rock, vaguely atmospheric ambient pop and sad balladry, all of it informed by overfamiliar words on love and heartbreak and delivered in a way that suggests everyone involved knows it's the hits that count and they don't need to worry too much about the rest of it. Singles aside, it does not demand repeated listening.
Will Hodgkinson

T
Jazz albums
Julian Lage and Ralph Towner reviewed at thetimes.co.uk/arts

FIRST NIGHT

the best critics on the top shows of the week

theatre

Debate: Baldwin vs Buckley

Stone Nest, W1

★★★☆☆

The 1965 debate between the US conservative political commentator William F Buckley Jr and the African-American essayist and novelist James Baldwin at the Cambridge Union was a lightning moment in race relations: we feel the heat from it now. This curious staging is the latest recent work to revisit it — it featured in Raoul Peck's 2016 Baldwin documentary *I Am Not Your Negro*, while Nicholas Buccola's 2019 book *The Fire Is Upon Us* performed a detailed, revelatory anatomy.

Debate stands in stark contrast to these works and to James Graham's acclaimed *Best of Enemies*, which plunged us into the heart of Sixties America, scrutinising another rivalry of Buckley's as he sparred with Gore Vidal on TV. Here, theatre company the American Vicarious shuns social context and presents the debate as if we ourselves were sitting in the Cambridge Union.

The artistic director Christopher McElroen founded the company "to reflect on America's ideals and realities". Here proceedings are initiated by an ancient black-and-white TV broadcasting the original debate; as we sit watching the grainy images the cast members walk in.

The motion of the debate was "Is the American dream at the expense of the American negro?" With the microscope planted so firmly on the language here that yields dividends, not least since it demonstrates the subtlety of the rhetoric used as much as the mercurial aspects of the men's personalities.

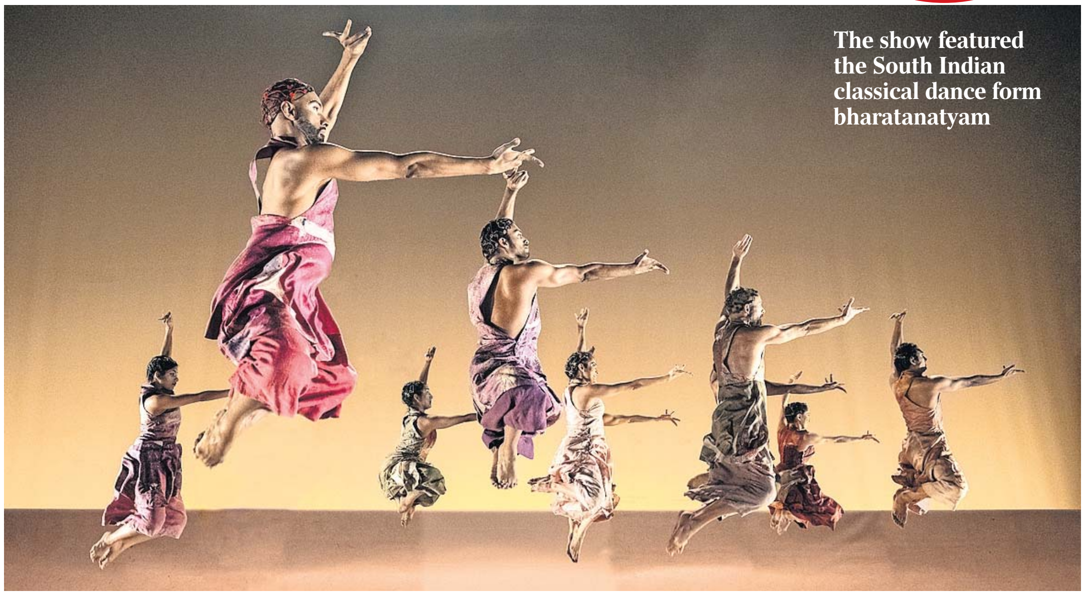
Teagle F Bougere's performance as Baldwin brings with it the significance of the essayist's early days as a Pentecostal preacher; though he rejected religion it informed his morality and the cadences of his speech. Eyeballing the audience, Eric T Miller revels in Buckley's suave sophistry.

This is for those who like their philosophy neat and their theatre high-fibre. An intriguing experiment that — despite explosive material — is defiant in its lack of fireworks.

Rachel Halliburton

To April 8, stonenest.org

FOTEINI CHRISTOFILOPOULOU; MARILYN KINGWILL



The show featured the South Indian classical dance form bharatanatyam

Spring has sprung

Seeta Patel's thrilling South Indian take on Stravinsky is terrific, says Debra Craine

dance

The Rite of Spring

Sadler's Wells

★★★★☆

Seeta Patel's east-meets-west staging of *The Rite of Spring* has much to recommend it in its own right. But add in the full musical resources of the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra and its chief conductor, Kirill Karabits, and you have something very special indeed. With 70 musicians packed into the Sadler's Wells orchestra pit we heard Stravinsky's score in all its power and glory. Karabits picked out the softer, finer details in the music while nurturing its sense of urgency and its thrilling rhythmic ferocity. What a treat for dance fans.

Patel's vocabulary as a choreographer is the South Indian classical dance form bharatanatyam, and she uses its geometric patterns and hyper-expressive articulation to create an exciting ritual for a dozen terrific dancers. It comes with a twist that sets it apart from its western cousins — the Chosen One, usually a woman, is here a man, who instead of dancing himself to death becomes a deity to whom the community must submit to bring about nature's rebirth.

There's a great sense of community in the first part, as Patel's mercurial choreography weaves the ensemble into a swirling bravado driven by excitement at the religious ritual ahead. It's a mistake, then, to take a four-minute break between the two halves of the score for a dream sequence anointing the Chosen One — Stravinsky's music has far too much momentum to let it take a breath.

In part two it's back to Stravinsky, and Sooraj Subramaniam's compelling Chosen One takes over. He's the centrepiece of a fascinating ceremony to seal his fate. Here Patel's tightly focused choreography delivers a dynamic sense of purpose, along with some beautiful tableaux and striking imagery (the lighting is gorgeous) as Subramaniam's majestic, mysterious Chosen One is elevated to divine status at a devastating personal cost.

Stravinsky's score runs to about 40 minutes, so to give the audience a proper evening of dance Patel prefaces *The Rite of Spring* with *Shree*, her 30-minute solo showcasing the various attributes of bharatanatyam. Unfortunately her cycle-of-life dance, accompanied by vocals, percussion and flute, feels overlong and deflated on the large, dark stage. Still, after the interval, all is forgiven when Karabits and the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra take over.

Debra Craine

Touring later this year, seetapateldance.com

theatre

Village Idiot

Nottingham Playhouse

★★★★☆

Set in a raucously, rudely stylised version of the small countryside community in which he grew up, Samson Hawkins's debut full-length play is a corker, an outrageously funny, politicised rural comedy loaded with zingers and heart, both of which are well served by a cast of six in Nadia Fall's big and bouncy staging.

The show is a co-production with Theatre Royal Stratford East and Ramps on the Moon, a consortium who provide platforms for deaf and disabled artists and audiences.

It is plain from the get-go that *Village Idiot* is anything but an earnest slice of realism. The play flip-flops between the Northamptonshire village of Syresham, which in Lily Arnold's imaginative design is indicated by a handsome forest, and a village fair/fantasy variety show that takes place in front of a stage-filling red, ruched curtain. Syresham is under threat of destruction from the high-speed rail development HS2. Hawkins projects the larger, topical conflict imposed by big business and grasping "townies" onto a handful of members of two outwardly opposing families.

The Honeybones are ruled by an iron-willed, foul-mouthed elderly matriarch named Barbara (Eileen Nicholas), while the Mahoneys are led, but only to some degree, by Kevin (Mark Benton), a jovial yet depressed middle-aged contractor who dreams of escaping to Thailand. The sassy, gleeful drama is further complicated by the needs and desires of their children and grandchildren — Debbie (Faye Wiggan), Liam (Joseph Langdon), Peter (Philip Labey) and Harry (Maximilian Fairley).

You sense that Hawkins loves these people. At the very least he understands them enough to expose their fears, foibles, prejudices and spirit in language that is outspoken and hilariously inventive. This is not a show for the easily offended. The laughs come thick and fast, and are always rooted in character. Highly recommended.

Donald Hutera

To March 25, nottinghamplayhouse.co.uk. Then touring, rampsonthemoon.co.uk

pop

The Matt Goss Experience

Royal Albert Hall

★★★☆☆

If nothing else, Matt Goss deserves credit for turning humiliation into career opportunity. Five years ago the documentary *Bros: After the Screaming Stops* transformed the Lewisham-born singer from boy-band survivor to national joke. With his humourless pomposity and dim stabs at wisdom, he came across like a real-life David Brent. But Goss has since appeared on *Strictly Come Dancing*, released his first Top Ten solo album, and is now on tour with his 15-piece big band augmented by players from the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra.

Still boyish and lithe at 54, Goss bounced on stage in a sharp suit. After his 11-year Las Vegas residency, the singer is fond of pitching himself as a British Sinatra. He scattered his set with *Luck Be a Lady*, *Fly Me to the Moon* and an inevitable *My Way*. But by slavishly copying Sinatra's jazzy phrasing and finger-snapping body language, Goss brought little new to these bloodless tribute-act facsimiles.



Matt Goss paid tribute to Frank Sinatra

He fared better with other vintage classics. Cole Porter's *Love for Sale* had an agreeably raunchy, sassy swagger while *Nature Boy*, the Eden Ahbez tune made famous by Nat King Cole, sounded misty-eyed and wistful wreathed in sumptuous strings and luminous flamenco-tinged guitar.

Only two Bros songs featured, both in exotic new arrangements. *I Owe You Nothing* worked well as a rollicking Motown-style retro-soul belter, *When Will I Be Famous?* less so as an ungainly hybrid of reggae and big band swing. The singer's post-Bros solo albums provided more fruitful pickings, especially the rousing, gospel-infused power ballad *The Beautiful Unknown.*

That said, for somebody who has been performing since his teens, Goss remains strangely devoid of charisma, warmth or charm. He repeatedly solicited free drinks from the crowd, a cheeky joke that soon began to grate. The David Brent of pop strikes again.

Stephen Dalton

Touring to April 22, mattgoss.la

first night

theatre

Farm Hall

Jermyn Street Theatre, SW1

★★★★☆

Like characters in Sartre's *Huis Clos*, these men are confined together as they contemplate their past and their mistakes. But this chamber play is very much rooted in real events: the first-time playwright Katherine Moar — a PhD student at King's College London — takes her inspiration from Operation Epsilon, the Second World War programme in which the Allies interned a group of German scientists in a Cambridgeshire house and eavesdropped on their conversations about the Nazis' atomic bomb project.

The other obvious parallel is with Michael Frayn's *Copenhagen*, a portrait of the physicists Niels Bohr and Werner Heisenberg. Heisenberg turns up again here, beautifully played by Alan Cox, equivocating about the extent to which he was a disinterested searcher after truth or an accomplice to evil. Yet where Frayn's play wanders deep into abstruse theoretical speculation, the great merit of Moar's much more conventional piece — sensitively directed by Stephen Unwin — is that the occasional reference to cyclotrons never overwhelms the purely human element.

We find our protagonists (Moar has whittled the original ten down to a more manageable six) trying to get to grips with the ways of the inscrutable British by performing a read-through of *Blithe Spirit*.

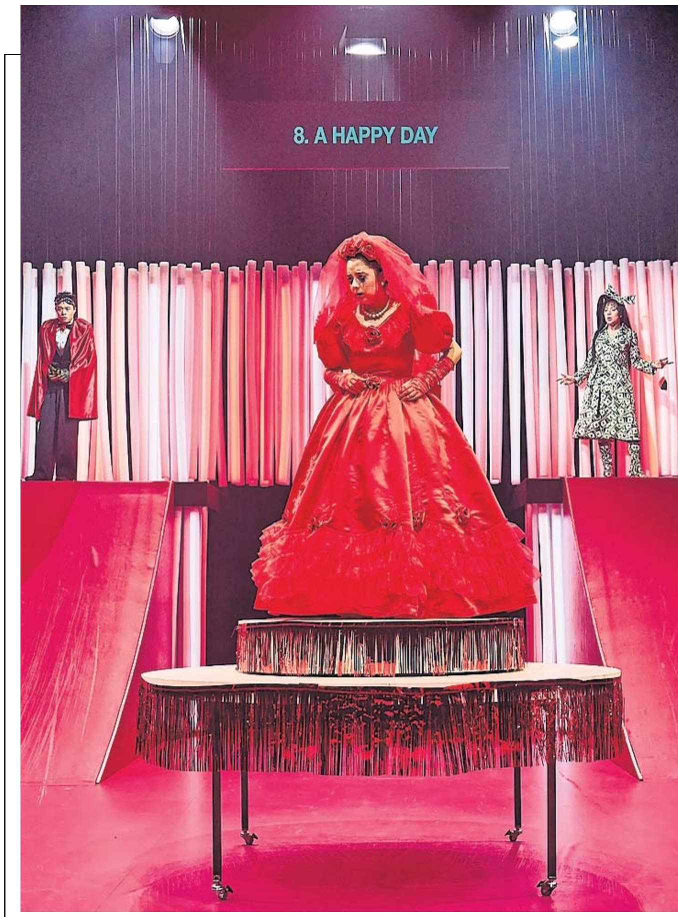
Any sense of fraternity among the scientists soon dissolves. In a strong ensemble Julius D'Silva is particularly impressive as Diebner, a pompous figure who, as a Party member, is quietly shunned by the others. As the worldly young von Weizsäcker, Daniel Boyd hammers out Schubert on the rickety piano.

If there's one flaw, it's that Moar doesn't give us more background on each of the protagonists. Even so, Archie Backhouse, Forbes Masson and David Yelland bring depth to Bagge, Hahn and von Laue respectively. How much has Moar embellished the transcripts? That's one for the historians. All I can say is that she has sculpted a thoroughly absorbing series of vignettes.

Clive Davis

To April 8, jermynstreettheatre.co.uk, then at Theatre Royal, Bath, April 12-15, theatreroyal.org.uk

MANUEL HARLAN; MARILYN KINGWILL



Ami Tredrea as Shen Te grounds a freewheeling farce

Pinball wizard! Brecht updated

A bright, bold renewal of a classic plays out like an arcade game, says Donald Hutera

theatre

The Good Person of Szechwan

Crucible Theatre, Sheffield

★★★☆☆

In the director Anthony Lau's hands, Nina Segal's update of Bertolt Brecht's 80-year-old morality play is a sparky pop satire for a dozen actors who gamely juggle double that number of roles. The jocular, often cartoonishly quirky manner in which they deliver Segal's snappy, vernacular script undercuts Brecht's didactic tendencies. The result is wacky but barbed entertainment, sometimes wayward but consistently likeable.

Originally commissioned by English Touring Theatre, this co-production with Sheffield Theatres and the Lyric Hammersmith has the look of a bright, slick and colourful arcade game. The designer Georgia Lowe's clever, attention-grabbing set features an upper level curtained by thick plastic light tubes. Characters frequently enter down two slides positioned on either side of the main playing area, which is surrounded by a moat brimming with hundreds of black and white rubber balls. And every entrance is marked by a loud "ping" and flash of light — like in a pinball machine.

The human centrepiece of this shinily meretricious environment is Ami Tredrea's Shen Te, an impoverished but savvy young sex worker with charitable instincts that

> **Every entrance is marked by a loud 'ping' like in a pinball machine**

do her no good at all. Everyone she knows or meets takes advantage of Shen Te, and so for her own protection she adopts the guise of a male cousin who is harder and more mercenary than anyone else. Tredrea's deft performance grounds this freewheeling farce. Her Shen Te is neither saint nor sinner. She is instead a survivor sometimes flummoxed by circumstances beyond her control, but rarely losing her will or wits.

The ambiguities that arise from Brecht's central premise spin round the question of how to define goodness in a grasping, capitalist society. True to the Brecht source material, characters burst into karaoke-style song (composed by DJ Walde). The cast maintains an agreeable balance even when things tip over into the ridiculous, or feel drawn-out or heavy-handed.

Leo Wan's winning turn in the opening scene as a desperately shrewd water-seller helps to set the show's comic tone, while Nick Blakeley, Callum Coates and Tim Samuels have fun as a touristic trio of sheet-wrapped gods in trainers searching for one worthy individual who might be able to ward off an apocalypse. But the last word goes to the veteran actor Togo Igawa, sagely advising us not to be good — just better.

To April 1, sheffieldtheatres.co.uk, then at Lyric Hammersmith, W6, April 15 to May 13, lyric.co.uk

jazz

The Comet is Coming

Engine Rooms, Southampton

★★★★☆

Of all the musical projects featuring the prolific and versatile saxophone player Shabaka Hutchings, the Comet is Coming remain the most thrillingly rowdy and unapologetically fun. Featuring Hutchings alongside the keyboard player Dan "Danalogue" Leavers and the drummer Max "Betamax" Hallett, the mutant-jazz trio are a pretty strong prospect on record, but their natural habitat is the stage, where their sheer kinetic physicality and frenzied improvisational energy really achieves lift-off. A riotous explosion of sly humour, cosmic sci-fi imagery and superfluous sunglasses, this show was partly a head-banging rave and partly a pummelling workout for the senses.

The Comet is Coming are typically labelled a jazz band, but theirs is an irreverent, omnivorous, jazz-adjacent sound with heavy metal, punk, funk, prog rock and electronic dance music thrown in. Indeed, Leavers dominated much of this set with his flamboyant keyboard pyrotechnics, vying for Hutchings's tenor sax as lead instrument. With their vaulting arpeggios and gleaming synthesizer ripples, stand-out tracks such as *Code* and *Pyramid* channelled vintage Nineties rave-pop.

On sprawling psychedelic freakouts such as *Blood of the Past* and *Birth of Creation*, Hutchings stirred up a maelstrom of frenzied honk and skronk over elasticated rhythms, walking a careful line between discipline and combustible chaos.

More exhilarating were the anarchic breakout solo sections. Leavers layered staccato keyboard fanfares over bone-shaking sub-bass shudders and lush electro-rock melodies. Hutchings unleashed a supercharged stampede of chromatic squalls and ostinato squawks, remixing the frenetic modernist energy of bebop and free jazz for the 21st century, channelling Albert Ayler and Alice Coltrane and Sun Ra into a rocket-fuelled rave-punk racket. The Comet is Coming know their musical heritage, but they are smart enough not to be intimidated by the weight of history, keeping jazz alive as avant-garde party music.

Stephen Dalton

Tonight, Koko, NW1, thecometiscoming.co.uk

pop

George Ezra

The O2, SE10

★★★☆☆

Given he is the cheery Hertfordshire boy done good, an evening with George Ezra was never going to be a challenging affair. Here was a 29-year-old who in 2021 celebrated having two No 1 albums not with disgraceful displays of hedonism and excess, but by heading off on a walking tour from Land's End to John o' Groats.

On last year's *Gold Rush Kid* he painted himself as the regular bloke who got away with it against the odds, and although there have been hints of darkness around the edges — Ezra has OCD and he has talked about the breakdown-inducing pressures of touring — his formula of hook-laden songs about the good things in life has remained essentially the same. No wonder the audience was made up chiefly of people who prefer a Coca-Cola to a beer and who faced the very real challenge of staying awake until the concert was over. Ezra has become the pop equivalent of a comic book hero.

Ezra certainly appeared to have accepted his role. Bounding on stage with his seven-piece band, performing against a colourful landscape of forests, mountains and other nice things from nature, he started with the faux-tropical jollity of *Anyone for You (Tiger Lily)*, making it clear to all present that he wasn't about to head off in a terrifying new doom metal direction. For *Cassy O'* his band even engaged in knees-up comedy dance routines. It was all pretty simple singalong stuff, which did start to grate an hour or so in. But Ezra possessed an uncynical desire to please his young audience,



George Ezra possessed an uncynical desire to please his young crowd

which you need if you are going to ask them to join you on a song of outrageously benign charm called *Pretty Shining People*.

Sometimes you had to wonder if Ezra longed to be a bit more edgy. He did go a touch moody and atmospheric on the rocking *Did You Hear the Rain?*, confusing a few thousand kids in the process, but then it was straight into the Radio 2 balladry of *Hold My Girl* and all was right with the world. After that, the picnic pop of *Green Green Grass* and the gap year favourite *Budapest* sent Ezra's young fans home contented and ready to climb the wooden hills to Bedfordshire. As basic as it was, the concert — complete with a soul revue-style solo section on *All My Love* — was nothing if not good-natured.

Will Hodgkinson

first night

classical

Concerto Italiano

Wigmore Hall, W1

★★★★☆

Celebrating its 40th birthday next year, Concerto Italiano has stayed faithful over the decades not just to a certain repertoire but to a certain way of performing it. Under its director and harpsichordist, Rinaldo Alessandrini, it concentrates on the Italian baroque from Monteverdi to early Handel (an Italian composer in all but passport during his formative years), and it interprets that music with a glinting, hard-edged clarity.

Not everyone warms to that approach. I remember having a heated discussion with a distinguished British interpreter of Monteverdi when I had the temerity to claim that this incisive, laser-like way of singing was perhaps closer to how the music would have been performed in the 17th and 18th centuries than the more soft-grained, nuanced style of British singers.

Certainly there were times in this BBC lunchtime recital of Handel, Alessandro Scarlatti and Francesco Mancini when I wished that the soprano Sonia Tedla, in particular, had matched the tenderness in the texts with a gentler approach to timbre. It was all a bit hewn in granite.

On the other hand, in music where the lines are constantly and sinuously intertwining it was wonderful to hear the dissonances, and some incredible harmonic sidesteps, delivered with such bite by Tedla and an excellent bass, Gabriele Lombardi. At that stage in his career Handel was still an experimental composer, picking and choosing stylistic innovations from Scarlatti and other older Italian composers, and playing with them like a kid exploring a toy box. In some ways you wish he hadn't suppressed the maverick spirit in his later English years, turning himself into the foursquare grandmaster of the oratorios.

Alessandrini revelled in the twists and turns of Handel's harpsichord Suite in E minor, and a fine cellist, Marco Frezzato, delivered Scarlatti's Cello Suite No 1 in impeccable style. A packed Wigmore Hall crowd demanded an encore, and the choice was eccentric but delightful: the duet *Là ci darem la mano* from Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, with Alessandrini enjoying every skittish moment on the keyboard.

Richard Morrison

On BBC Sounds

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Untitled (Narrative Scene), dating from the 1980s, by Purvis Young. Below: Eagle, 1988, by Ralph Griffin

Hopeful and harrowing

The work of black artists from the American South tells stories of hardship and resilience, says Chloë Ashby

visual art

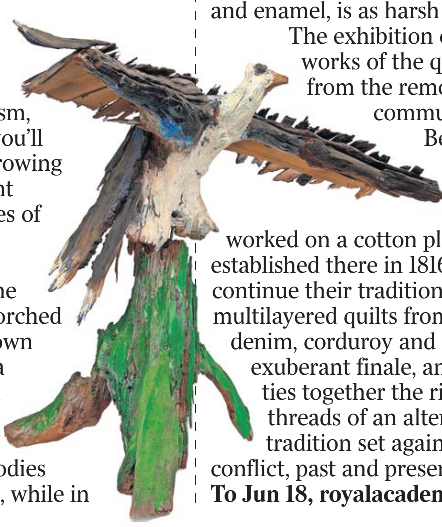
Souls Grown Deep Like the Rivers

Royal Academy

★★★★☆

During the first 70 years of the 20th century millions of black people left their homes in the American South and relocated to the northern states — a mass exodus known as the Great Migration. But what of those who stayed behind? This striking show brings together the creations of 34 artists born between 1887 and 1965 who remained in their communities and have recounted tales of hardship, oppression and resilience in their art.

On show are beautiful and wildly original paintings, reliefs, patchwork and assemblage. Most are from the Atlanta-based Souls Grown Deep Foundation, which advocates for the inclusion of the region's artists in the art historical canon. At first the bright colours and bold textures on display evoke optimism, but look closer and you'll see traces of the harrowing legacy of enslavement and the harsh realities of social and economic inequality.



Rusty chains tell the story, twisted and scorched branches, a small crown perched up high on a gnarled tree. Painted in the 1980s, Purvis Young's *Untitled (Jail Scene)* depicts bodies writhing behind bars, while in his *Untitled (Narrative Scene)* folk in trucks and boats are ferried over a yellowish green landscape and blood-red sea. A collection of crumpled rags and gloves hang limply on a line in Thornton Dial's *Green Pastures: The Birds That Didn't Learn How to Fly* (2008). Joe Minter's *And He Hung His Head and Died* (1999) is a menacing crucifix-like sculpture of welded metal.

Found and recycled objects form the basis of much of the art. Ralph Griffin's wide-winged *Eagle* (1988) is made from salvaged driftwood. Jimmy Lee Sudduth created his melancholy paintings with a mix of mud, coffee grounds and grass stains, berry juice, pencil and paint. Ronald Lockett's *Sarah Lockett's Roses* (1997), constructed from roughly cut tin, nails and enamel, is as harsh as it is delicate.

The exhibition ends with the works of the quilt-makers from the remote Alabama community of Gee's Bend. Descended from the enslaved people who worked on a cotton plantation established there in 1816, the residents continue their tradition of making multilayered quilts from scraps of denim, corduroy and cotton. It's an exuberant finale, and one that ties together the rich and varied threads of an alternative art tradition set against racial conflict, past and present.

To Jun 18, royalacademy.org.uk

classical

Figure Ensemble

Swiss Church

★★★★☆

Around the clusters of people waiting on the street, newcomers sidled up to ask, in furtive tones as if talking about some kind of cult, "Are you here for the Buxtehude?" Eventually, the doors opened and we filed into the serene Swiss Church. We'd been told this event by the Figure Ensemble would be "immersive" and perhaps that buzzword made us timid, because nearly everyone loitered around the edges, like teenagers at a school disco. But we were soon chivvied to stand in the middle for, it turned out, some more waiting. And as the uncertain atmosphere grew, and the start of the concert ran late, I worried that this brave venture from a fledgling ensemble would fall flat.

Then the music began and my concerns disappeared, because this was a display of real quality. The idea was simple: a period-instrument performance of Buxtehude's *Membra Jesu Nostri*, giving a sense of its original context. This seven-cantata cycle based on a medieval Latin hymn was first performed in 1680, and here the artistic directors Frederick Waxman and Philip Barrett took inspiration from a direction on the original score: "To be sung with the humblest devotion of the whole heart." Moving between five stations, singing from memory, the five young singers (Claire Ward, Katie Macdonald, Tom Lilburn, Michael Bell and Hugo Herman-Wilson) gave us that whole-hearted performance, enveloping us in glorious sound.

If there's ever a piece to be immersed in, it's this: a meditation on the crucified parts of Jesus's body — feet, knees, hands, side, breast, heart and face. There's an intensity to the writing, an intimacy to the expression that comes alive up close, underlined by beautiful digital illustrations based on a sculpture in Buxtehude's Lübeck church on one wall, the English surtitles projected on another.

If there's room for this two-year-old outfit to develop its own sound, all the signs are that Figure Ensemble could become a distinctive fixture on the scene. For an encore? The Passion Chorale from Bach's St Matthew Passion, sung first in German by the performers, then in English by the audience.

Rebecca Franks

theatre

Marjorie Prime

Menier Chocolate Factory, SE1

★★★☆☆

With ChatGPT trying to become everyone's best friend, Jordan Harrison's meditation on artificial intelligence, which premiered in Los Angeles in 2014, arrives here at an opportune moment. In the space of 80 minutes it sketches a world, some 40 years hence, where androids known as Primes become companions for people suffering from cognitive ailments. As the machines hoover up human memories, the dead can be brought back from the grave as facsimiles.

It's a thought-provoking miniature that doesn't quite generate the dramatic tension you hope for. In that respect it's reminiscent of Caryl Churchill's concise dystopian cloning fantasy *A Number*.



Anne Reid plays a dementia patient

The power of Dominic Dromgoole's sleek production lies in the quality of the performances. Eighty-seven-year-old Anne Reid is utterly convincing as Marjorie, an American matriarch slowly descending into a form of dementia; the eyes twinkle as she stares into mid-distance. Nancy Carroll goes one better as her daughter Tess, who looks on with a mixture of pain and resentment.

When we first see Marjorie she is chatting to a bland, besuited fellow (smoothly played by Richard Fleeshman) who has shop-window mannequin gestures and turns out to be a younger version of her late husband. At times Marjorie seems to understand that he is not the real thing — she is sharp enough to spot tiny imperfections — but she finds solace in being able to talk to him.

Meanwhile, her son-in-law Jon (the ever impressive Tony Jayawardena) has been conscientiously taking notes that he can feed to the machine. Harrison drops clues about the gap that separates the old lady from those around her. Some of the everyday language she uses, familiar to us, means nothing to them.

Towards the end Harrison leads us into a hall of mirrors where it is hard to tell the difference between humans and their opposite numbers. It all happens too quickly, too neatly. But I was utterly transfixed by Carroll's slow disintegration. The anguish on her face etched itself into my memory.

Clive Davis

To May 6, menierchocolatefactory.com

A living nightmare met with poise and dignity

Carol Midgley TV review



Nazanin
Channel 4
★★★★★

How did Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe keep her sanity over the six years that she was outrageously imprisoned in Iran? How did her husband, Richard, keep his temper? Her immense stoicism and his unfailing politeness (even when talking to Dominic Raab!) were among the most impressive features of this remarkable documentary.

The grainy footage at the beginning of Nazanin when she was arrested at the airport in Tehran in 2016 was excruciating to watch, knowing what unfolded. As she pushed her luggage trolley, oblivious to the hell's mouth about to open, she looked like a lamb walking to the slaughter.

At first there was the faux civility of the officers — "Excuse me, madam, are these all yours? You're hoping to fly to London?" (Note the sinister "hoping".) She didn't look too alarmed, which itself was heartbreaking. Then the less friendly tone. "You are banned from leaving the country … I have an order for your arrest. You must come with us to the interrogation department." Cut to Nazanin being blindfolded in solitary and cross-examined by the Iranian Revolutionary Guard, then separated from her baby daughter Gabriella for almost six years. And all, it turned out, because of an order for Chieftain tanks and other hardware, made before she was born, but for which she made a useful hostage.

This film took five years to make (she was sentenced to five years on invented charges of "spying"), and invited us into Richard Ratcliffe's home to offer an intimate perspective. I imagine that this felt intrusive, but publicity was vital (he was absolutely right to stage his hunger strike outside the Foreign Office to shame it into action). We heard his phone conversations with Nazanin in prison, where a recorded voice kept interrupting to say, "This call was made from prison," chipping away at morale. Yet they dealt with this living nightmare with such poise and dignity.

DANIEL LEAL/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES



Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe with her husband and daughter

I'm sure there were fights, tears and recriminations too but their upbeat, supportive and loving conversations were a lesson in resilience.

Yes, there was one occasion when we heard Nazanin slating another person with whom she'd had a row, but what amazing self-control most of the time. She kept a positive, cheery front to her beloved daughter on FaceTime when she was reduced to being a spectator in her life.

Could you have kept your temper when Boris Johnson put his enormous foot in it when he blithely and inaccurately said Nazanin had been "teaching people journalism"? Richard allowed himself merely one expletive at the radio — "What the f*** did you just do there?" — when I think I would have kicked chairs around the room.

Ditto when it emerged that Nazanin had been seized as a pawn over a £400 million debt Britain owed to Iran over an arms deal made in the early 1970s but cancelled when the Shah's regime fell. Why did it take all those years and five foreign secretaries to pay that debt and secure her release?

Those reunion scenes at RAF Brize Norton were beautiful, Nazanin clutching her child and husband, weeping with relief. It was right that the camera then turned off, leaving them to a private life. Because what it has cost them amounts to far more than a paltry £400 million.

Radio choice
Joe Clay



The Battle for Liberal Democracy
Radio 4, 11am

In years to come historians may well regard the global struggle between liberal democracy and its enemies as the most fundamental issue of the 2020s. In this new three-part series Tom Fletcher, *above*, a former diplomat and adviser to three British PMs, will draw on his own experiences in countries such as Lebanon, Kenya and France to reveal how a battle has developed since the Cold War ended. The first episode analyses security, asking which type of government delivers it best. In the fallout from the war in Ukraine, are democracies better or worse placed to push back against autocracy?

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Times Radio
Digital, web, smart speaker, app
5.00am Rosie Wright with Early Breakfast **6.00** Chloe Tilley and Calum Macdonald with Times Radio Breakfast **10.00** Matt Chorley. An insider's take on politics **1.00pm** Ruth Davidson. Covering the big political stories of the week **4.00** Cathy Newman with Times Radio Drive. Friday's headlines and discussions **7.00** Ed Vaizey. The Conservative peer and former MP sits in bringing his take on the day's news **10.00** Henry Bonsu **1.00am** Stories of Our Times **1.30** Red Box **2.00** Highlights from Times Radio

Radio 2
FM: 88-90.2 MHz
6.30am The Gaby Roslin Breakfast Show. A Red Nose Day special **9.30** Gary Davies **12.00** Jeremy Vine **2.00pm** Scott Mills **3.30** Scott Mills' Wonder Years **4.00** OJ Borg **7.00** Michelle Visage **8.30** Michelle Visage's Handbag Hits. Feelgood party classics handpicked by Michelle guaranteed to make Friday night seem fabulous. Michelle's mood is Cabaret, Old Chum! **9.00** The Good Groove with DJ Spoony. A mix of soulful house and lyrical garage tunes **11.00** The Rock Show with Johnnie Walker. The host introduces a selection of rock tracks **12.00** Romesh Ranganathan: For the Love of Hip-Hop (r) **1.00am** The Story of the 12" Single **2.00** Radio 2 Unwinds with Angela Griffin (r) **3.00** Radio 2 Celebrates Country Live in Glasgow **4.00** Sophie Ellis-Bextor's Kitchen Disco

Radio 3
FM: 90.2-92.4 MHz
6.30am Breakfast
Petroc Trelawny presents. Including **7.00**, **8.00** News. **7.30**, **8.30** News headlines
9.00 Essential Classics
Georgia Mann presents music and features, featuring new discoveries, musical surprises and plenty of familiar favourites
12.00 Composer of the Week: Purcell (1659-1695)
Donald Macleod explores what we know of Purcell's own private life, alongside some of the last music he wrote. In the final six years of his life, Purcell wrote music for 42 plays, while keeping up a regular output of odes and intimate music for domestic settings. Purcell (*The Prophetess, or The History of Dioclesian*, Z. 629 —Act V; *Music for the Funeral of Queen Mary*, Z. 860i; *Incassum lesbia, incassum rogas* — z. 383; *Play music for Abdelazer*, and *From Rosy Bowers*) (r)
1.00pm Radio 3 Lunchtime Concert
Quatuor Van Kuijk perform Debussy, Poulenc, and Laurent Durupt. With Fiona Talkington. Poulenc arr Jean-Christophe Masson (*Three Mélodies*); Laurent Durupt (*Grids for Greed*); and Debussy (String Quartet) (r)
2.00 Afternoon Concert
Louise Farrenc's Symphony No 3, concertos by Ravel and Stravinsky from the pianist Steven Osborne and the violinist Leonidas Kavakos, and the trumpet-piano duo Simon Höfele and Frank Dupree. Presented by Fiona Talkington. Handel (Concerto grosso in D, op. 6/5, HWV 323); Enescu (*Légende*); Stravinsky (Violin Concerto in D major); Weill (*Slow Fox and Algi-Song*); Farrenc (Symphony No.3 in G Minor, Op.36); Schütz (*Singet dem Herr ein neues Lied* a 8 SWV 35 — Psalm 98); Moeran (*Rhapsody No.2* in E major); Elvis Costello (*Almost Blue*); and Ravel (Piano Concerto in G)
4.30 The Listening Service
Exploring Bartok's *Bluebeard's Castle* (r)
5.00 In Tune
7.00 Classical Mixtape
Classical favourites mixed with jazz and folk
7.30 Radio 3 in Concert
Lionel Bringuier conducts the BBC Symphony Orchestra in 20th-century French masterworks with soloist Akiko Suwanai joining for Dutillieux's violin concerto. Recorded on March 10. Debussy (*Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune*); Dutilleux (*L'arbre des songes*); Roussel (*Le Festin de l'araignée,* Op 17); and Ravel (*La valse*)
10.00 The Verb
As a new season arrives, Ian McMillan and guests consider ambivalence and beauty in writing about spring. This week Ian peers into the yellow heart of the daffodil to find out what makes a great spring poem, and shares poetry by some of the most remarkable poets of our moment, as well as those inspired by the colours of crocuses past. Ian is joined by Penelope Lively, Caleb Femi takes us to spring on a South London Estate, and Paul Farley turns our attention to the overlooked and unloved places (r)
10.45 The Essay: Lundy, Fastnet, Irish Sea — Wales and Its Coastal Waters
How the herring trade has brought Wales great fortune over the years
11.00 Late Junction
Verity Sharp shares the results of the latest long-distance collaboration session, between enigmatic English producer Shackleton and Kenyan rapper MC Yallah (r)
1.00am Composed with Devonté Hynes
2.00 Piano Flow with Tokio Myers (r)
3.00 Through the Night

Radio 4
FM: 92.4-94.6 MHz LW: 198kHz MW: 720 kHz
5.30am News Briefing
5.43 Prayer for the Day
5.45 Farming Today
5.58 Tweet of the Day (r)
6.00 Today
With Amol Rajan and Martha Kearney
8.31 (LW) Yesterday in Parliament
9.00 Desert Island Discs
With Amanda Blanc (10/12) (r)
9.45 (LW) Daily Service
9.45 Breaking Mississippi
With increasing numbers of armed segregationists headed for the university campus in Oxford — President John F Kennedy is in secret negotiations with Mississippi Governor Ross Barnett (5/10)
10.00 Woman's Hour
Magazine presented by Anita Rani
11.00 The Battle for Liberal Democracy
Tom Fletcher examines the complex international contest between democracy and its enemies. ***See Radio Choice*** (1/3)
11.30 Lemn Sissay Is the One and Only
The poet draws upon his experience of growing up in an all-white town (3/4)
12.01pm (LW) Shipping Forecast
12.04 AntiSocial
Presented by Adam Fleming (10/12)
1.00 The World at One
1.45 Shock and War: Iraq 20 Years On
Gordon Corera explores why the US and UK went to war in Iraq (5/10)
2.00 The Archers (r)
2.15 Drama: Boswell's Lives
Comedy written by Jon Canter (2/4) (r)
2.45 Understand: The Economy
Who wins and who loses if the pound is cheap against the dollar (9/15) (r)
3.00 Gardeners' Question Time
Experts answer listeners' queries
3.45 Sunil Patel: An Idiot's Guide to Cryptocurrency
The comedian Sunil Patel tries to take the crypto art space by storm (2/4) (r)
4.00 Last Word
The lives of famous and less well-known people who have recently died
4.30 Feedback
With Andrea Catherwood (2/4)
5.00 PM
5.54 (LW) Shipping Forecast
6.00 Six O'Clock News
6.30 The Now Show
New run. A look at the week's news (1/6)
7.00 The Archers
Paul helps Alistair and Jakob escape from it all, while Usha has a visitor
7.15 Add to Playlist
A musical journey of discovery (6/8)
8.00 Any Questions?
From Danehill Village Hall, East Sussex
8.50 A Point of View
A reflection on a topical issue
9.00 Frankenstein Lives!
An exploration of the rich and unsettling history of the Frankenstein myth (r)
10.00 The World Tonight
News round-up with Julian Worricker
10.45 Book at Bedtime: Old God's Time
By Sebastian Barry (5/10)
11.00 Americast
Analysis of cultural and social stories breaking in the US (10/12)
11.30 Today in Parliament
12.00 News and Weather
12.30am Breaking Mississippi (5/10) (r)
12.48 Shipping Forecast
1.00 As BBC World Service

Radio 4 Extra
Digital only
8.00am Mr Willow's Wife **8.30** Babblewick Hall **9.00** Act Your Age **9.30** Bleak Expectations **10.00** The Mystery of the Yellow Room **11.00** The Toff and the Runaway Bride **11.30** Stand By for West **12.00** Golden Child **12.15pm** Blowing the Bloody Doors Off **12.30** The Wilsons Save the World **1.00** Mr Willow's Wife **1.30** Babblewick Hall **2.00** Act Your Age **2.30** Bleak Expectations **3.00** The Mystery of the Yellow Room **4.00** The Toff and the Runaway Bride **4.30** Stand By for West **5.00** Golden Child **5.15** Blowing the Bloody Doors Off **5.30** The Wilsons Save the World **6.00** Mr Willow's Wife **6.30** Babblewick Hall **7.00** Act Your Age. With Mike Wozniak, Robin Ince and Ted Robbins **7.30** Bleak Expectations. Pip and Ripely face an undead army. Last in the series **8.00** Food in the Frame. Artists' fascination with food over the centuries **8.30** Soul Music. Listeners shares stories of Neil Young's *Harvest Moon* **9.00** The Distant Echo. Thriller by Val McDermid. Originally broadcast in 2005 **10.00** Comedy Club: The Ultimate Choice. With guests Pippa Evans and Dave Johns **10.30** Beauty of Britain. Beauty works at a care home **11.00** John Kearns. Comic vignette **11.15** Poets' Tree. Comedy with Kevin Eldon **11.30** Listen Against. An episode from 2007

Radio 5 Live
MW: 693, 909
5.00am The Big Green Money Show **5.30** Wake Up to Money **6.00** 5 Live Breakfast **9.00** Nicky Campbell **11.00** Chiles on Friday **1.00pm** Elis James and John Robins **2.00** 5 Live Sport. Horse racing coverage from the Cheltenham Festival **4.00** 5 Live Drive **7.00** Rugby Union. A preview of the final round of the Six Nations Championship **8.00** 5 Live Sport: The Friday Football Social **10.00** Stephen Nolan **1.00am** Laura McGhie

talkSPORT
MW: 1053, 1089 kHz
5.00am Early Breakfast **6.00** talkSPORT Breakfast with Alan Brazil **10.00** Jim White and Simon Jordan **1.00pm** Hawksbee and Jacobs **4.00** talkSPORT Drive with Andy Goldstein and Darren Bent **7.00** GameDay Countdown: Nottingham Forest v Newcastle United (Kick-off **8.00**). The Premier League match at The City Ground **10.00** Sports Bar **1.00am** Extra Time with Martin Kelner

TalkRadio
Digital only
5.00am James Max **6.30** Jeremy Kyle **10.00** The Independent Republic of Mike Graham **1.00pm** Ian Collins **4.00** Vanessa Feltz **7.00** Plank of the Week **8.00** Friday Night with Nadine **9.00** Serial Killer with Piers Morgan **10.00** The Best of the Talk **11.00** Live James Whale **1.00am** Martin Kelner

6 Music
Digital only
5.00am The Remix with Chris Hawkins **5.30** Huw Stephens **7.30** Lauren Laverne **10.30** Mary Anne Hobbs **1.00pm** Chris Hawkins **4.00** Steve Lamacq **7.00** The People's Party with Afrodeutsche **9.00** Nabihah Iqbal **11.00** The Ravers Hour **12.00** 6 Music's Indie Forever **1.00am** 6 Music's Emo Forever **2.00** Focus Beats **4.00** Ambient Focus

Virgin Radio
Digital only
6.30am Chris Evans **10.00** Eddy Temple-Morris **1.00pm** Jayne Middlemiss **4.00** Ricky Wilson **7.00** Ben Jones **10.00** Rich Williams **1.00am** Olivia Jones

Classic FM
FM: 100-102 MHz
6.00am More Music Breakfast **9.00** Alexander Armstrong **12.00** Anne-Marie Minhall **4.00pm** John Brunning **7.00** Smooth Classics at Seven. Presented by Zeb Soanes **10.00** Smooth Classics **1.00am** Katie Breathwick **4.00** Sam Pittis

television & radio

Viewing Guide
James Jackson

Comic Relief 2023
BBC1/BBC2, from 7pm

Top pick

We may be jumping the gun, but the words "I have a cunning plan" could be marching with ill-deserved confidence in the direction of the schedules tonight. Yes, Baldrick is back for one night only! For it's that time when BBC celebrities implore you to dig deep in your pocket for good causes while they put on some top comedy as a sweetener. Tony Robinson's beloved *Blackadder* character is just one reason to tune in. Sprinkled around films highlighting the stories of those helped by Comic Relief projects will be a *Ghosts* special starring Kylie Minogue and a spoof of *Love Island* featuring an unexpected "BOMBSHELL" being introduced into the villa. There will also be a parody of *The Traitors* in which a star-studded round table gathers to decide who should be banished, with Claudia Winkleman played by Dawn French among others. In addition to those two reality show skits, there will be a reminder of another one at 10pm on BBC2 as we look back to 2001, when six celebrities entered the *Big Brother* house (Jack Dee and Anthea Turner among them) and celebrity reality TV was born. Comic Relief itself was born 38 years ago, and at 10.40pm on BBC1 there'll be a 60-minute bit of "Red Nose-talgia" recalling the best bits from its history. As for Baldrick, he'll be reading a bedtime story in his own inimitable style. Or you can just ignore all this and text-donate either FIVE, TEN, TWENTY, THIRTY or FORTY to 70702.

Bono and The Edge: A Sort of Homecoming with Dave Letterman
Disney+

U2 have been quiet for a few years, but they're back with a sort of vengeance in 2023: a new album reimagining old tracks (out today), a short set of Las Vegas dates promising state-of-the-art audiovisuals — except without Larry Mullen Jr on drums (crocked back) — and this documentary, in which Bono and The Edge welcome the US chat show legend David Letterman to Dublin. Bono, looking older, reflects on life and music, and they sing a few songs and go to the pub. All good craic.

Early

BBC1
6.00am Breakfast **9.15** Morning Live. Gethin Jones's 24-hour *Strictly Come Dancing* challenge for Comic Relief **10.00** Crimewatch Live. Appeals for information from the public **10.45** Critical Incident. In Manchester, PCs chase to a gunman in a residential area **11.15** Homes Under the Hammer. Properties in Staffordshire, Enfield and Southampton (r) (AD) **12.15pm** Bargain Hunt. From Newark Antiques and Collectable Fair (r) (AD) **1.00** BBC News at One; Weather **1.30** BBC Regional News; Weather **1.45** Hope Street. Marlene sabotages an undercover investigation (r) (AD) **2.30** The Repair Shop. A Second World War pilot's leather bomber jacket is restored **3.00** Escape to the Country. Nicki Chapman is on a property search in rural Somerset, helping a couple invest their £500,000 in a home that strikes the balance between country charm and practical open planning (r) (AD) **3.45** Antiques Road Trip. Natasha Raskin Sharp and Phil Serrell shop in Northern Ireland before their final auction in Wales. Last in the series **4.30** Bridge of Lies. Quiz show hosted by Ross Kemp (r) **5.15** Pointless. Quiz presented by Alexander Armstrong (r) **6.00** BBC News at Six; Weather **6.30** BBC Regional News; Weather

BBC2
6.30am Escape to the Country (r) (AD) **7.15** Antiques Road Trip (r) **8.00** Sign Zone: Gardeners' World (r) (SL) **9.00** BBC News **12.15pm** Politics UK. The week's political proceedings around the UK **1.00** Impossible. Rick Edwards hosts the quiz (r) **1.45** Eggheads. Quiz show hosted by Jeremy Vine (r) **2.15** Eggheads. Jeremy Vine hosts (r) **2.45** Hairy Bikers' Best of British. Si King and Dave Myers explore the British tradition of cooking with game, preparing dishes with rabbit, grouse and venison (r) **3.30** Land of the Lost Wolves. In the conclusion of the two-part documentary, Gordon Buchanan and the team discover most of the animals have been killed by locals — but there is still hope on the horizon (r) (AD) **4.30** Priceless Antiques Roadshow. A celebration of the television series (r) **5.00** Flog It! The team are at Herstmonceux Castle in Sussex, where antiques experts James Lewis and Catherine Southon unearth treasures brought in by visitors to sell at auction (r) **6.00** Richard Osman's House of Games. With Reeta Chakrabarti, Olga Koch, Andrew Maxwell and Gareth Thomas (r) **6.30** Coast to Coast Food Festival. Edith Bowman and Colin Murray explore the Foodies Festival in Glasgow

ITV1
6.00am Good Morning Britain **9.00** Lorraine. Entertainment, current affairs and fashion news, as well as showbiz stories and gossip. Presented by Lorraine Kelly **10.00** This Morning. Daily magazine, featuring a mix of chat, showbusiness news, lifestyle features, topical discussion, health and beauty advice and more. Including Local Weather **12.30pm** ITV News; Weather **12.50** Regional News; Weather **1.00** Live ITV Racing: Cheltenham Festival. Ed Chamberlin presents coverage of day four of the prestigious festival, including feature race the **3.30** Gold Cup, plus races at **1.30**, **2.10**, **2.50** and **4.10**. With analysis from Mick Fitzgerald, AP McCoy and Ruby Walsh, reports by Matt Chapman, Alice Plunkett, Luke Harvey and Rishi Persad, commentary from Richard Hoiles, social stable thoughts with Oli Bell, and all the news around the racecourse from Chris Hughes **4.30** Tipping Point: Best Ever Finals. Compilation of some of the show's most dramatic endgames **5.00** The Chase. Bradley Walsh presents as contestants answer general knowledge questions and work as a team to take on one of the Chasers and secure a cash prize (r) **6.00** Regional News; Weather **6.30** ITV News; Weather

Channel 4
6.10am Countdown. Pat Nevin is in Dictionary Corner (r) **6.50** 3rd Rock from the Sun (r) (AD) **7.40** The King of Queens (r) (AD) **9.00** Frasier (r) (AD) **10.30** Undercover Boss USA. The co-founder of an art class franchise works alongside her staff (r) **11.25** Channel 4 News Summary **11.30** Emergency Helicopter Medics. An appearance at a charity event is cut short by an emergency (AD) **12.30pm** Steph's Packed Lunch. Weekday magazine show hosted by Steph McGovern **2.10** Countdown. Colin Murray and Rachel Riley host, and Pat Nevin is in Dictionary Corner **3.00** Tool Club. It's the team's last day in Preston and the pressure is on to complete the Stanley Grange residential community allotment makeover **4.00** A New Life in the Sun. The season winds down at the alpaca farm in France, where two expats have added a glamping tent (r) **5.00** Four in a Bed. The contestants discover who has won the competition **5.30** Come Dine with Me. The last person to host in Huddersfield is an NHS worker **6.00** The Simpsons. Homer and Marge buy a self-help video to improve their lives (r) (AD) **6.30** Hollyoaks. Darren tries to mediate between Nancy and Charlie, Brooke gets a job offer, and Ste makes a shocking discovery (r) (AD)

Channel 5
6.00am Milkshake! **9.15** Jeremy Vine. The broadcaster and guests discuss the issues of the day with co-host Storm Huntley joining him for phone-ins and reading out viewers' correspondence **12.45pm** GPs: Behind Closed Doors. A patient arrives to see a doctor about the stomach pains he has had since a recent spot of gardening and a musician is worried about pains in her fingers (r) (AD) **1.40** 5 News at Lunchtime **1.45** Home and Away. Theo is in denial about having a stalker, while Xander dresses up for a date with Stacey (r) (AD)
2.15 FILM: Fatal Mother's Retreat (PG, TVM, 2021) A woman with a mysterious online stalker struggles to co-parent with her ex-husband and is invited to a singles getaway. Thriller starring Lara Amersey and Christina Cox **4.00** Bargain-Loving Brits in the Sun. A catch-up with series favourites who swapped Essex for a new life on the Costa del Sol 13 years ago, and now run a business supplying awnings and glass walls (r) **5.00** 5 News at 5 **6.00** Big Road Rescue: Emergency Call Out. A team tries to recover a car that has crashed into a river, while a van that has become wedged on top of a garden wall needs recovering (r) (AD) **6.55** 5 News Update



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Evening (7PM–11PM)

BBC1
7.00 Comic Relief 2023 Live from MediaCityUK in Salford, David Tennant, Zoe Ball, Paddy McGuinness, Joel Dommett and AJ Odudu host a night jam-packed full with celebrity guests, hilarious sketches and live musical performances. There is a special edition of *The Traitors* with Claudia Winkleman, while Kylie Minogue joins forces with the cast of hit BBC sitcom *Ghosts* in a spook-tacular one-off sketch. Beloved comedy character Baldrick (Tony Robinson) reads his very own *Blackadder* bedtime story, while the cast of *Mrs Doubtfire* take to the stage to perform one of the songs from the show, and there is live music from chart-toppers Tom Grennan and Zara Larsson. *See Viewing Guide*

10.00 BBC News at Ten

10.30 BBC Regional News and Weather

10.40 Comic Relief: The Best of the Best Bits Highlights from 35 years of Red Nose Day which, since its inception in 1985, has raised more than £1billion for a range of vital causes

11.50 The Peanut Butter Falcon (12, 2019) A man with Down's syndrome runs away to become a wrestler. Adventure with Shia LaBeouf (AD)

BBC2
7.00 Saving Lives at Sea Just off the west coast of Scotland, on the rugged Isle of Mull, the Tobermory lifeboat crew have to battle huge waves to save a 40-foot fishing boat that has lost all power. On the Pembrokeshire coast, the crew are called out to reports of an injured fisherman (9/10) (r) (AD)

8.00 Gardeners' World New series. Monty Don and the team are back with a celebration of spring. As well as getting on with some essential rose pruning, the host will be planting clematis and rocket, cutting back grasses and making a start on sowing annuals for colour this summer

9.00 Becoming Frida Kahlo Frida and Diego travel to San Francisco where he has an important mural commission. Her style stirs much excitement, and Frida is determined to succeed in her own right in the face of Diego's affairs. *See Viewing Guide* (2/3) (AD)

10.00 When Comic Relief Did Big Brother Famous-faced housemates, including Jack Dee, look back at their 2001 tenure in the *Big Brother* house. *See Viewing Guide*

10.35 Newsnight Analysis of the day's events presented by Faisal Islam

11.10 MOTDx Football discussion presented by Jermaine Jenas (r)

11.40 Couples Therapy Ping and Will face the truth. India and Dale share insights about their work with Orna (9/9)

ITV1
7.30 Emmerdale Cathy's behaviour puts her life in danger, Alex makes an effort while Paddy is still struggling (AD)

8.00 Coronation Street Stephen lets himself into Carla's flat while she sleeps, and Dee-Dee is appalled by Adam's offer to represent Damon. Meanwhile, Evelyn invites Roy to her birthday gathering (AD)

9.00 Redemption New series. Liverpool-based detective Colette Cunningham heads to Dublin when she learns that her estranged daughter Kate has died. Crime drama with Paula Malcomson. *See Viewing Guide* (1/6) (AD)

10.00 ITV News at Ten

10.30 Regional News

10.45 The 40 Year-Old Virgin (15, 2005) A middle-aged shop worker reveals he has never been intimate with a woman, which prompts his shocked colleagues to set him up with a series of potentially passionate dates. When he falls for a single mother, his friends think he is right on course for a lusty liaison, but his new partner is not ready for a physical relationship. Judd Apatow's comedy starring Steve Carell and Catherine Keener (AD)

Channel 4
7.00 Channel 4 News

8.00 Highclere: Behind the Scenes Documentary following life at Highclere Castle, best known as the setting for Downton Abbey. Lady Carnarvon becomes an unexpected tour guide for some Americans who have turned up expecting a private tour of the famous castle (1/5) (r) (AD)

9.00 Gogglebox The armchair critics are back to tuck into their takeaways while watching the best of the week's television and streaming output, sharing their thoughts for the rest of the viewing public to see

10.00 The Last Leg Adam Hills, Josh Widdicombe and Alex Brooker are joined by guest comedians Nish Kumar and Fern Brady for a comic review of the significant moments of the week

11.05 The Inbetweeners The friends decide to play truant from sixth form and buy alcohol for an all-day drinking session, which is interrupted (2/6) (r) (AD, SL)

11.40 The Inbetweeners Simon passes his driving test, and the lads take a trip to a theme park. However, their route is obstructed (3/6) (r) (AD, SL)

Channel 5
7.00 Motorway Cops: Catching Britain's Speeders An inspector is left baffled by the strange behaviour of a motorist who fails to stop. Meanwhile, an officer races to deliver life-saving equipment to a motorist with a suspected heart attack (5/8) (r)

7.55 5 News Update

8.00 Motorway: Hell on the Highway One motorist goes airborne following an encounter with a roundabout. Cameras also focus on the difficulties of driving on black ice by examining three case studies (2/6)

9.00 Amazing Railway Adventures with Nick Knowles The presenter explores Norway, stays for a night on the River Namsen, takes a helicopter ride, meets a reindeer herder, and goes swimming in near freezing sea (2/6)

10.00 Draining the Thames: Secrets Revealed The Thames' water is drained, revealing new evidence of how the British capital came to be one of the most powerful cities on Earth (r)

11.00 The Fifth Element (PG, 1997) A 23rd-century New York cab driver protects a mysterious woman destined to save the world from destruction. Luc Besson's sci-fi adventure starring Bruce Willis, Gary Oldman, Milla Jovovich, Ian Holm and Chris Tucker

Late

BBC1
1.20am Six Nations Sin Bin Gabby Logan and Gareth Thomas are joined by Patrick Kielty, Zoe Lyons and Colin Charvis to reflect on this year's Six Nations championship. The Sin Bin Road Trip is back in Glasgow as JJ Chalmers and Aimee Fuller take on Gordon Bulloch in a line-out challenge. Last in the series **1.55-6.00** BBC News

BBC2
12.05am Dave Dave continues to hold his own feet to the creative fire (r) (AD) **12.35** Dave. Benny and Dave's friendship blossoms (r) (AD) **1.05** Sign Zone: Cops, Cash and Fraudsters — Panorama (r) (SL) **1.35** Parole (r) (AD, SL) **2.35** Our Flag Means Death (r) (AD, SL) **3.00-4.00** Gary Lineker: My Grandad's War (r) (AD, SL)

ITV1
1.00am Teleshopping 3.00 The Jonathan Ross Show. The host is joined by the actor Andy Serkis, the comedians Alan Carr and Babatunde Aleshe and ex-footballer Peter Crouch and his wife, model Abbey Clancy. With music by Paolo Nutini (r) (SL) **3.55** Unwind with ITV **5.05-6.00** Ainsley's Fantastic Flavours (r) (SL)

Channel 4
12.10am Friday Night Dinner Dad accidentally invites someone he hates to come round for dinner (r) (AD, SL) **12.40** Friday Night Dinner (r) (AD, SL) **1.05** Derry Girls (r) (AD, SL) **2.00** GameFace (r) (AD, SL) **2.55** The Simpsons (r) (AD) **3.20** Come Dine with Me (r) (AD) **5.35-6.00** Jamie: Keep Cooking and Carry On (r) (AD, SL)

Channel 5
1.25am The LeoVegas Live Casino Show 3.25 Tutankhamun with Dan Snow. The story of the Egyptian pharaoh (r) **4.15** Tutankhamun with Dan Snow. A look at an injury the pharaoh sustained towards the end of his life (r) **5.05** The Railways That Built Britain with Chris Tarrant (r) (AD, SL) **5.55-6.00** Peppa Pig (r) (SL)

television & radio

Extrapolations
Apple TV+

An anthology series with a cast it would take several hours to list (Meryl Streep, Edward Norton, Marion Cotillard …), each slick episode is linked by the subject of climate change. The first episode, *2037*, pinballs between Matthew Rhys's odious deal-maker seeking to build a casino on a Greenland glacier, Kit Harington's tech billionaire and Sienna Miller going into labour in a forest fire. The series is anything but shy about its messages, with speechy environmental warnings every five minutes. A thought-provoking and bleak view of the near future.

Becoming Frida Kahlo
BBC2, 9pm

You couldn't accuse Frida Kahlo and Diego Rivera's marriage of being dull. During their trip to America in the 1930s, where Rivera, then the more famous of the pair, had been commissioned to paint murals, Kahlo began an affair with the artist Georgia O'Keefe. Photographers were quickly going wild for Kahlo rather than Rivera. Tragedy lurked, and Rivera would go one further with his affairs, bunking up with Kahlo's sister. The second part of this biographical documentary is again vivid in anecdote and archive, evoking a wildly artistic world.

Redemption
ITV, 9pm

What starts off looking like yet another standard tough detective drama — we meet DI Colette Cunningham (Paula Malcomson) chasing down a ne'er-do-well through the streets of Liverpool — settles into something smarter and more brooding. It's no spoiler to say that DI Cunningham finds out her estranged grown-up daughter has been found dead in Dublin. So Cunningham travels to the city to pick up the pieces with the teenage grandchildren she never knew she had and uncover the truth behind her daughter's death. Malcomson is excellent in the lead role.

Film Four Lions
Film4, 11.35pm

Chris Morris directs this abrasive comedy about four lads from the north of England who buy into the war against the West but fail to be a threat to anyone except themselves. The climax, set against the London Marathon, is gloriously absurd. (15, 2010)

Sky Max

6.00am Stargate SG-1 (r) **8.00** DC's Legends of Tomorrow (r) (AD) **9.00** Quantum Leap (r) **10.00** Supergirl (r) **11.00** NCIS: Los Angeles (r) **1.00pm** Hawaii Five-0 (r) **2.00** S.W.A.T (r) (AD) **3.00** Quantum Leap (r) **4.00** DC's Legends of Tomorrow (r) (AD) **5.00** Supergirl (r)
6.00 Stargate SG-1. Teal'c, Carter and Daniel return to Stargate Command (r)
7.00 Stargate SG-1. The team's wormhole triggers an ecological disaster (r)
8.00 Strike Back: Shadow Warfare. Stonebridge and Scott discover a new threat (r)
9.00 A League of Their Own Road Trip: Southeast Asia. Previously unseen footage
10.00 Fantasy Football League. With Roman Kemp and Russell Howard. Last in the series
10.35 SEAL Team (2/10) (r)
11.35 Banshee (7/8) (r) (AD)
12.35am The Force: North East. A fight leads to an arrest (r) **1.30** Road Wars (r) **2.00** NCIS: Los Angeles (r) **3.00** Hawaii Five-0 (r) **4.00** S.W.A.T (r) (AD) **5.00** Highway Patrol (r)

Sky Atlantic

6.00am Fish Town (r) **7.55** The Affair (r) (AD) **10.00** Gomorrah (r) **12.05pm** Game of Thrones (r) (AD) **1.10** The Leftovers (r) (AD) **3.30** Gomorrah (r) **4.35** Succession (r) (AD)
6.50 Yellowjackets. Out in the wilderness, the girls plan a dark arts slumber party (r) (AD)
7.55 Game of Thrones. Jorah and Daario undertake a difficult task, and Jaime and Cersei try to improve their situation (r) (AD)
9.00 Succession. Shiv, Kendall and Roman confront their father, and Tom makes a life-changing decision (9/9) (r) (AD)
10.15 Christian. Matthew meets Father Klaus, a priest who may have important information for his investigation (5/6) (r)
11.20 The Wire. Marlo orders several murders and talks with Avon in prison about getting in touch with drug-trafficker Vondas (2/10) (r)
12.30am The Wire. Marlo offers a reward for information about Omar (r) **1.40** The Leftovers. Kevin tries to forget that he died (r) (AD) **2.50** Game of Thrones (r) (AD) **4.00** Fish Town (r)

Sky Documentaries

6.00am The Story of Late Night (r) **7.00** Discovering: Walter Matthau (r) (AD) **8.00** The Directors (r) (AD) **9.00** The Nineties (r) **10.00** The Vow (r) (AD) **11.50** My Icon: Michael Holding (r) (AD) **12.00 FILM: The Biggest Little Farm (PG, 2018) 1.50pm** My Icon: Leon Pryce (r) (AD) **2.00 FILM: Man on Wire (12, 2008)** A tightrope walk between the World Trade Center towers **4.00** The Directors (r) (AD)
5.00 Discovering: Walter Matthau (r) (AD)
6.00 The Nineties (r)
7.00 The Vow (r) (AD)
8.50 My Icon: Pam Cookey (r) (AD)
9.00 Dublin Narcos (r)
10.00 FILM: Fatboy Slim — Right Here, Right Now Documentary about the Big Beach Boutique II free event in 2002
11.50 Brazil 2002 (r)
1.40am My Icon: Thierry Henry (r) (AD) **2.00** Villeneuve Pironi: Racing's Untold Tragedy. Documentary **4.00** The Directors (r) (AD)
5.00 Discovering: Walter Matthau (r) (AD)

Sky Arts

6.00am Darbar Festival 2022 **7.15** La Dolce Vita: The Music of Italian Cinema **9.00** Tales of the Unexpected (AD) **10.00** Alfred Hitchcock Presents **11.00** Discovering: Frances McDormand **12.00** Thomas Hardy: Fate, Exclusion and Tragedy (AD) **1.00pm** Tales of the Unexpected (AD) **2.00** My Greatest Shot: Street **2.30** My Greatest Shot: Animals **3.00** Landscape Artist of the Year 2019 **4.00** Discovering: Meg Ryan **5.00** Tales of the Unexpected (AD) **5.30** Alfred Hitchcock Presents
6.00 Alfred Hitchcock Presents
6.30 The Chieftains: Water from the Well — Live Over Ireland. The band discuss inspirations
7.50 Fleetwood Mac: Live in Boston
9.00 Women Who Rock. Last in the series
10.15 Guy Garvey: From the Vaults
11.15 Gary Numan Resurrection
1.00am New Order: Decades **3.00** Brian Johnson's A Life on the Road **4.00** Classic Albums **5.00** Music Icons: The New Orleans Sound **5.30** Video Killed the Radio Star

Sky Main Event

6.00am Live Ladies European Tour Golf. Coverage of day two of the Aramco Team Series event from Singapore **9.00** Live NRL: Sydney Roosters v South Sydney Rabbitohs (Kick-off **9.05**). Coverage of the match at Allianz Stadium **11.00** The Football Show **11.30** Live PGA Tour Golf: The Valspar Championship **1.00pm** Live Formula 1. The Saudi Arabian Grand Prix first practice session **3.00** Live Pakistan Super League. Coverage of the second Eliminator
4.45 Live Formula 1. Coverage of the Saudi Arabian Grand Prix second practice session
6.30 Sky Sports News
7.00 Live FNF: Nottingham Forest v Newcastle United (Kick-off **8.00**). Coverage of the Premier League match at The City Ground
10.45 Back Pages Tonight
11.00 Sky Sports News
2.30am Live NBA Basketball: Los Angeles Lakers v Dallas Mavericks (Tip-off **2.30**) **5.00** Live Ladies European Tour Golf. Day three of the Aramco Team Series event in Singapore

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TalkTV

6.00am James Max **6.30** Jeremy Kyle. The host covers all the stories you need to know to start your day **10.00** The Independent Republic of Mike Graham. A look at the morning newspapers **1.00pm** Ian Collins. Monologues, debates and time for your calls **4.00** Vanessa Feltz. The host guides you through the big stories of the day
7.00 Plank of the Week. Mike Graham presents the ultimate panel show where the guests get to nominate their Plank of the Week
8.00 Friday Night with Nadine. Former Cabinet Minister and author Nadine Dorries presents her take on the week with a mix of topical guests from the world of politics, culture and sport
9.00 Psychopath with Piers Morgan. Through intense prison interviews, Piers Morgan revisits the crimes of convicted serial killers and learns more about their motives
10.00 The Best of the Talk. A panel debate the hot topics everybody's talking about
11.00 Friday Night with Nadine
12.00 Andre Walker. Today's top stories
1.00am Vanessa Feltz **2.00** Plank of the Week **3.00** Friday Night with Nadine **4.00** The Best of the Talk **5.00** Cristo

BBC4

7.00pm Top of the Pops. Iggy Pop, Michael Bolton, Gloworm, East 17, EYC, Marcella Detroit and Elton John, and Stiltskin from May 1994
7.30 Top of the Pops. Music by Alice Cooper, Bad Boys Inc, Wet Wet Wet, 2 Unlimited, Seal and Julia Fordham from May 1994
8.00 Top of the Pops. Music by Leo Sayer, Gary Numan, Japan, ABC, Imagination and Visage
8.30 Top of the Pops. With Bruce Willis, the Mission, Erasure, Genesis, Al Jarreau and Prince
9.00 Phil Lynott: Songs for While I'm Away. The life and music of the Thin Lizzy frontman, telling the story of how a young working-class Black boy from 1950s Dublin became one of Ireland's greatest rock stars
10.30 Sight & Sound in Concert: Thin Lizzy. Vintage gig by the Irish guitar rockers at the Regal Theatre in Hitchin, Hertfordshire
11.05 Irish Rock at the BBC. A compilation of Irish rock performances from the archives. Featuring Thin Lizzy, Ash, the Undertones, Stiff Little Fingers, U2, Sinead O'Connor, the Pogues and the Divine Comedy
12.00 Top of the Pops **2.00am-3.30** Phil Lynott: Songs for While I'm Away

Talking Pictures

6.00am FILM: Topper Returns (PG, 1941) (b/w) **7.50** Driving The Train 1959 **8.15 FILM: Anna and the King of Siam (12, 1946)** (b/w) **10.50 FILM: Thunder in the City (PG, 1937)** (b/w) **12.30pm FILM: Daisy Kenyon (PG, 1947)** (b/w) **2.30** Crown Court **3.00 FILM: Androcles and the Lion (U, 1952)** Satirical fable starring Alan Young (b/w) **4.55** Crazy Motoring **5.05 FILM: Dry Rot (U, 1956)** Comedy starring Brian Rix (b/w)
6.50 FILM: Passport to Pimlico (U, 1949) Ealing comedy starring Stanley Holloway (b/w)
8.30 Dial 999 (b/w)
9.00 Cellar Club with Caroline Munro
9.05 FILM: The Curse of Frankenstein (12, 1957) Hammer horror starring Peter Cushing
10.45 Cellar Club with Caroline Munro
10.50 FILM: A Bucket of Blood (15, 1959) Comedy horror starring Dick Miller (b/w)
12.10am Cellar Club with Caroline Munro **12.15 FILM: The Knack and How to Get It (15, 1965)** Comedy starring Michael Crawford (b/w) **2.00 FILM: Kiss of Death (PG, 1947)** (b/w) **4.00 FILM: Tim Driscoll's Donkey (U, 1955)** (b/w) **5.00** Target: The Corruptors

Film4

11.00am To Hell and Back (PG, 1955) Second World War biopic starring Audie Murphy (AD) **1.10pm The Court-Martial of Billy Mitchell (U, 1955)** Courtroom drama starring Gary Cooper **3.15 Elephant Walk (U, 1954)** Melodrama starring Elizabeth Taylor **5.20 It Came from Beneath the Sea (U, 1954)** Monster adventure with Kenneth Tobey (b/w)
6.55 Maid in Manhattan (PG, 2002) A case of mistaken identity leads to romance between a hotel maid and a wealthy politician. Romantic comedy with Jennifer Lopez and Ralph Fiennes
9.00 Terminator: Dark Fate (15, 2019) Sarah Connor must stop an advanced liquid Terminator from hunting down a young girl, whose fate is critical to the human race. Sci-fi starring Arnold Schwarzenegger (AD)
11.35 Four Lions (15, 2010) Four British Muslims form an incompetent terrorist cell and hatch a scheme to attack the London marathon. Chris Morris' comedy starring Riz Ahmed and Kayvan Novak (AD). *See Viewing Guide*
1.40am-4.00 24 Hour Party People (18, 2002) Biopic of Factory Records founder Tony Wilson starring Steve Coogan

More4

8.55am Kirstie's Handmade Treasures **9.15** A Place in the Sun **10.05** A New Life in the Sun **11.05** Find It, Fix It, Flog It (AD) **1.10pm** Heir Hunters **2.10** Four in a Bed **4.50** Location, Location, Location **5.55** Kirstie and Phil's Love It or List It. In East Grinstead, West Sussex (AD)
6.55 A Place in the Sun. A couple looking for a holiday home in a rural region of Andalusia
7.45 The Great Pottery Throw Down: The Final. Siobhán McSweeney hosts the grand final with the three remaining contestants challenged to create a stacking, pyramid vase centrepiece and a sgraffito globe. Last in the series (AD)
9.00 The Wall: Cover Your Tracks. Celine and Alex uncover the identity of a vital individual linked to Justine, and a new corpse is discovered
10.00 24 Hours in A&E. A builder is rushed into A&E after falling 18 feet onto concrete (AD)
11.00 24 Hours in A&E. A 3-year-old is airlifted to St George's after being run over by a car while playing outside, and doctors treat a 14-year-old who injured his ankle while riding a BMX (AD)
12.05am 8 Out of 10 Cats Does Countdown. With Joe Lycett and Isy Suttie **1.05** 24 Hours in A&E (AD) **3.20-3.50** Food Unwrapped (AD)

ITV2

6.00am World's Funniest Videos **6.35** Totally Bonkers Guinness World Records (SL) **7.00** Love Bites (AD, SL) **8.00** Dress to Impress **9.00** Chuck **10.00** One Tree Hill **11.00** The O.C **12.00** Love Bites (AD) **1.00pm** Dress to Impress **2.00** Supermarket Sweep **3.05** Chuck **4.00** One Tree Hill **5.00** The O.C. Seth and Summer play Cupid
6.00 Catchphrase Celebrity Special (AD)
7.00 The Masked Singer US. A special Thanksgiving-themed episode
8.00 Superstore. The Cloud 9 employees prepare a send-off for Amy and Jonah (AD)
8.30 Superstore. Jonah throws his hat into the ring for the floor supervisor position (AD)
9.00 Loaded in Paradise. A game of two truths and a lie with a Greek plate-smashing twist
10.00 Family Guy (AD)
10.30 Family Guy (AD)
11.00 Family Guy (AD)
11.30 American Dad! (AD)
12.00 American Dad! (AD) **12.30am** Superstore (AD) **1.30** CelebAbility **2.20** Totally Bonkers Guinness World Records (SL) **2.45** Unwind with ITV **3.00** Teleshopping

ITV3

6.00am Classic Coronation Street (AD) **6.35** Classic Emmerdale **8.05** Man About the House **9.05** Where the Heart Is (AD) **11.10** Agatha Christie's Poirot (AD) **12.20pm** Heartbeat (AD) **1.25** Classic Emmerdale **2.25** Classic Coronation Street (AD) **3.30** Midsomer Murders (AD) **5.30** Downton Abbey. Ethel faces a dilemma (AD)
7.00 Heartbeat. The day of Nick and Jo's wedding arrives, but in a village where nothing ever goes smoothly, the policeman inevitably has trouble getting to the church on time (AD)
8.00 Grace. A body is dredged up from the English Channel, and the investigation forces Grace to ask himself just how far someone might go to save the ones they love (4/4) (AD)
10.00 DI Ray. The body count continues to rise as Rachita and the team uncover more evidence leading them to believe they are dealing with highly dangerous organised criminals (3/4) (AD)
11.00 DI Ray. Rachita makes a shocking discovery which has a huge impact on both her investigation and her personal life (4/4) (AD)
12.05am Where the Heart Is (AD) **2.15** Unwind with ITV **2.30** Teleshopping

ITV4

6.00am The Derby Through the Years **6.20** Robin of Sherwood **7.30** Magnum, PI **8.30** Live ITV Racing: The Opening Show. A preview of the Gold Cup **10.00** Great Racehorses **10.20** Minder (AD) **11.25** Dempsey and Makepeace (AD) **12.25pm** Robin of Sherwood **1.35** The Protectors **2.40** Magnum, PI **3.45** The Sweeney **4.50** Minder (AD) **5.55** Extreme Salvage Squad
6.55 The Chase Celebrity Specia. Bradley Walsh presents, with guests Dane Baptiste, Nigel Owens, Anita Rani and Mark Pougatch
8.00 The Chase Celebrity Special. Bradley Walsh presents, with guests Jacqui Oatley, Dev Griffin, Fallon Sherrock and Johnny Vegas
9.00 All Elite Wrestling: Dynamite. Hard-hitting action from the world of All Elite Wrestling
11.05 FILM: Terminator 2 — Judgment Day (15, 1991) A cyborg is sent back in time to protect the future saviour of the human race from a shape-changing assassin. Sci-fi adventure sequel with Arnold Schwarzenegger, Linda Hamilton and Edward Furlong (AD)
1.50am Robin of Sherwood. Robert is wounded **2.45** Unwind with ITV **3.00** Teleshopping

Drama

6.00am Teleshopping **7.20** Pie in the Sky **8.15** The Bill **9.15** Classic Holby City **10.35** Casualty **11.40** The Bill **12.40pm** Classic EastEnders **2.00** Howards' Way **3.10** Lovejoy **4.10** Peak Practice **5.20** The Brittas Empire
6.00 Keeping Up Appearances
6.40 Last of the Summer Wine. Foggy dreams up a car-parking scheme. Brian Wilde stars
7.20 Last of the Summer Wine. Compo tries to become a celebrity. Gorden Kaye guest stars
8.00 Father Brown. Lady Felicia's niece is suspected of murder. With Mark Williams (AD)
9.00 Father Brown. The priest investigates a death involving a group of pagans (AD)
10.00 New Tricks. The team reopens a case originally worked on by a corrupt colleague of Sandra's father, leading the detective to seek the truth about her family's shady past (5/8) (AD)
11.20 Cutting It. Gavin attends a business seminar, and learns Finn is guest speaker. Allie goes on a training course to prepare for the competition, and Mia invites herself along (5/6)
12.40am Bad Girls **1.40** Lovejoy **2.50** Classic Holby City (SL) **4.00** Teleshopping

Yesterday

6.00am Shipwreck Secrets **7.10** Underground Worlds (AD) **8.00** Abandoned Engineering (AD) **9.00** War Factories **10.00** The World at War **11.00** Secrets of the London Underground (AD) **12.00** Great British Railway Journeys **1.00pm** Great British Railway Journeys Goes to Ireland **2.00** Bangers and Cash **4.00** War Factories **5.00** The World at War. The battle for the Atlantic
6.00 Great British Railway Journeys Goes to Ireland. Visiting the Irish National Stud
6.30 Great British Railway Journeys Goes to Ireland. The final leg of the journey
7.00 Secrets of the London Underground. The Greenwich Power Station (9/10) (AD)
8.00 Train Truckers. Moving three state-of-the-art trains, fresh in from Japan (5/6)
9.00 Train Truckers. The crew collects a multi-million-pound maintenance machine (6/6)
10.00 Bangers and Cash. A delightful collection of British classics comes up for auction (5/10)
11.00 Abandoned Engineering (3/6) (AD)
12.00 Great British Railway Journeys
1.00am Shipwreck Secrets **2.00** Underground Worlds (AD) **3.00** Teleshopping

Variations

BBC1 N Ireland
As BBC1 except: 11.50pm Jerk (r) (AD) **12.15am** Jerk. Tim gets scouted as a drug dealer (r) (AD) **12.40** Have I Got News for You (r) **1.15-1.20** Suzie Lee: Home Cook Hero

BBC1 Scotland
As BBC1 except: 11.50pm A View from the Terrace. A sideways look at Scottish football (r) **12.50am** FILM: The Peanut Butter Falcon (2019) Adventure starring Shia LaBeouf (AD) **2.20** Six Nations Sin Bin **2.50** Weather for the Week Ahead **2.55-6.00** BBC News

BBC1 Wales
As BBC1 except: 11.50pm Six Nations Sin Bin (r) **12.20am-1.50** FILM: The Peanut Butter Falcon (2019) Light-hearted adventure (AD)

BBC2 N Ireland
As BBC2 except: 9.00pm-10.00 Ceiliúradh Na Féile Pádraig (r) **11.10** Becoming Frida Kahlo. *See Viewing Guide* (AD) **12.10am** MOTDx (r) **12.40-1.05** Couples Therapy

ITV1 Wales
As ITV1 except: 7.00pm-7.30 Coast & Country

STV
As ITV1 except: 1.00pm-4.30 Live STV Racing: Cheltenham Festival. Coverage of day four **7.00-7.30** What's on Scotland **10.30-10.45** STV News **3.55am-5.05** Night Vision

UTV
As ITV1 except: 7.00pm-7.30 UTV Life **10.45** St Patrick's Day **11.10** Starstruck. Teams of superfans are transformed into their music idols (r) **12.20am** Rare Breed — A Farming Year (r) **12.50-1.00** The Best of the 80s (r)

BBC Scotland
7.00pm The Seven **7.30** Live Sportscene — Championship: Arbroath v Greenock Morton (Kick-off **7.45**). At Gayfield Park **10.00** Still Game (r) (AD) **10.30** A View from the Terrace **11.30-12.00** Growing Up Scottish (r)

BBC Alba
6.00am Alba Today **5.00pm** Treubh an Tuathanais (Big Barn Farm) (r) **5.10** Pip & Posy (r) **5.20** Sionnach agus Maigheach (Fox & Hare) (r) **5.30** Beathaichean a' Bocadaich (r) **5.40** AH-AH/No-No (r) **5.45** Òrain CBeebies (r) **5.55** Stòiridh (r) **6.00** Aithne air Ainmhidhean (All About Animals) (r) **6.23** Damhan & Durrag/Pipas & Douglas (r) **6.25** @12 (r) **6.30** Geamaichean Gorach (r) **6.35** Ronia, Nighean a' Mheirlich/Ronja, the Robber's Daughter (r) **7.00** An Là (News) **7.25** Dàn (r) **7.30** Machair (r) **7.55** Fraochy Bay (r) **8.00** Fianais (r) **8.30** Golf: Mun Cuairt Alba (r) **9.00** Peann a Chlachair/The Stonemason's Pen (r) **9.45** Celtic Connections **10.00** FILM: Arracht (2019) **11.35** ALT (r) **11.50** Dhan Uisge (Rubislaw Quarry) (r) **12.00-6.00am** Alba Today

S4C
6.00am Cyw: Shwshaswyn (r) **6.10** Nico Nôg (r) **6.20** Digbi Draig (r) **6.35** Sam Tân (r) **6.45** Ahoi! (r) **7.05** Caru Canu a Stori **7.15** Ein Byd Bach Ni **7.25** Y Crads Bach (r) **7.30** Sion y Chef (r) **7.45** Fferm Fach **8.00** Bing (r) **8.10** Ysbyty Cyw Bach (r) **8.25** Octonots (r) **8.35** Anifeiliaid Bach y Byd (r) **8.45** Cei Bach (r) **9.00** Guto Gwningen (r) **9.15** Sali Mali (r) **9.20** Sbarc (r) **9.35** Pablo (r) **9.45** Byd Tad-Cu (r) **10.00** Shwshaswyn (r) **10.10** Nico Nôg (r) **10.20** Digbi Draig (r) **10.35** Sam Tân (r) **10.45** Ahoi! (r) **11.05** Caru Canu a Stori (r) **11.15** Ein Byd Bach Ni (r) **11.25** Y Crads Bach (r) **11.30** Sion y Chef (r) **11.45** Fferm Fach (r) **12.00** News; Weather **12.05pm** Caru Siopa (r) (AD) **12.30** Heno (r) **1.00** Richard Holt: Yr Academi Felys (r) **1.30** Pobl a'u Gerddi (r) **2.00** News; Weather **2.05** Prynhawn Da **3.00** News; Weather **3.05** Gareth Jones: Nofio Adre (r) **4.00** Awr Fawr: Shwshaswyn (r) **4.10** Caru Canu a Stori (r) **4.20** Nico Nôg (r) **4.30** Pablo (r) **4.45** Ahoi! (r) **5.00** Stwnsh: Rhyfeddodau Chwilengoch a Cath Ddu **5.25** Siwrne Ni (r) **5.30** Prosiect Z (r) **5.55** Ffeil **6.00** Nyrsys (r) (AD) **6.30** Adre (r) **6.57** News **7.00** Heno **7.30** News; Weather **8.00** Chris a'r Afal Mawr. The chef is in New York (r) (AD) **8.55** News; Weather **9.00** Sgwrs Dan y Lloer (r) **10.00** Y Stiwdio Grefftau (r) (AD) **11.00-11.35** Gwely a Brecwast Maggi Noggi (r)

MindGames

Backgammon Chris Bray

Learning to lose

A few years ago, a strong bridge player at our club decided to revive his interest in backgammon. It was quickly evident that he was a good player, but his problem was that he expected to win every game that he played, and he found it very hard to cope with his losses. So much so that after six months he returned to bridge full time.

Unlike chess or go where players can play for years without losing a single game, backgammon is all about maximising your equity over the long term and accepting that you will lose a lot of the games along the way. I would estimate that even the best players do not win more than 60 per cent of the games they play.

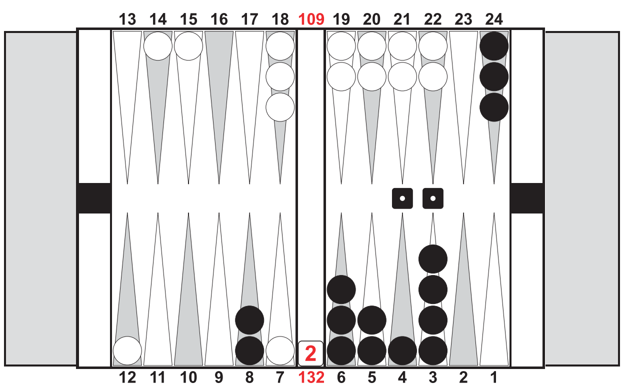
However, as most casino players will know, even a small edge will give you significant returns over a long period of time. You must accept your losses with equanimity and believe that your skill will win out in the long run. After all, in a 32-player tournament, 31 players will go home disappointed, so learning to lose is a key part of one's backgammon education.

The second part of the equation is knowing when to give up trying to win a game and accept the loss of a single game, rather than continuing to play for the win and then ending up losing a gammon. This week's position demonstrates that point very clearly.

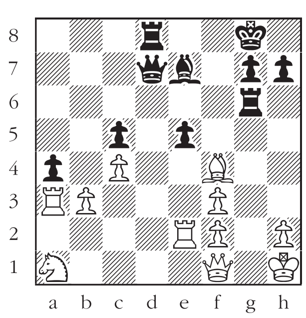
Black has been doubled, and his position is truly terrible. However, he has just rolled double ones to give him a lifeline. How should he play it? If this was a tournament and the score was 6-6 in a match to 7, Black would have to try the very risky 24/23, 8/7*, 3/2(2) in an attempt to win the game, as gammons are irrelevant.

In a money game, common sense would need to prevail, and Black should play 24/23(3), 3/2. This will retain some winning chances (about 12 per cent) while losing only 14 per cent gammons as opposed to the 33 per cent gammons lost after the very bold 24/23, 8/7*, 3/2(2).

Once you learn how to lose with good grace you will become a much stronger player.



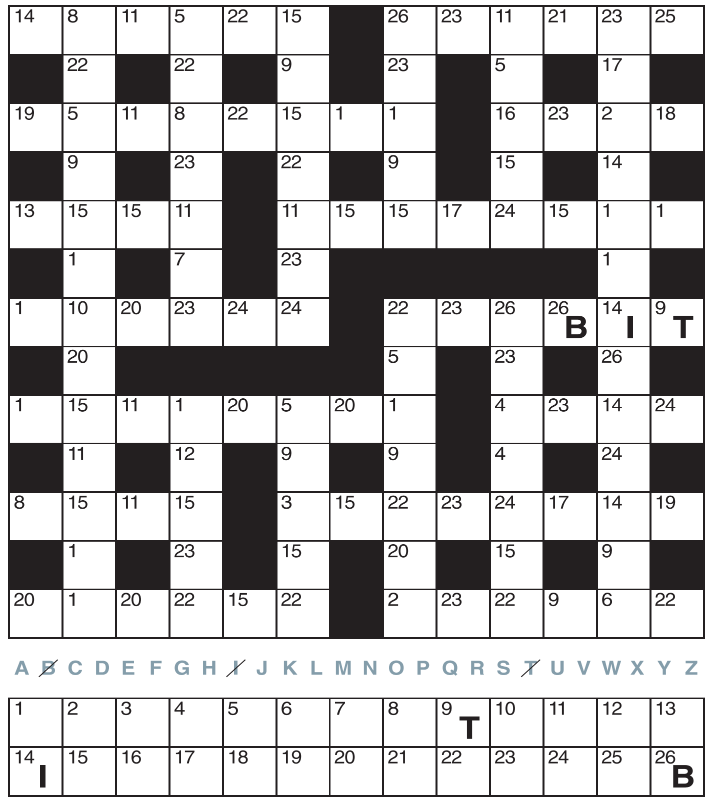
Winning Move



Black to play.
This position is from Leisch-Morgunov, Vienna 2023.

All serious chess games are played with a time control so the pressure to move quickly is constant. In such circumstances it is always tempting to play an obvious move quickly. Here White has just captured on f4 and many Black players would simply recapture without any thought. Morgunov, to his credit, didn't. What did he play instead?

Codeword No 4851

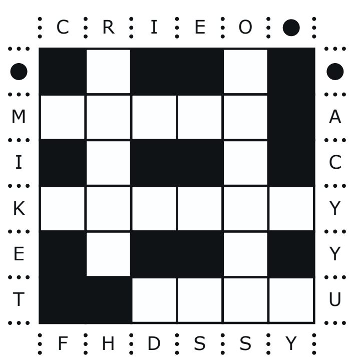


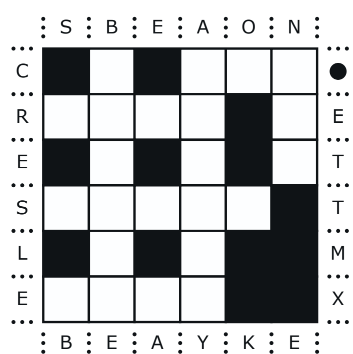
Every letter in this crossword-style grid has been substituted for a number from 1 to 26. Each letter of the alphabet appears in the grid at least once. Use the letters already provided to work out the identity of further letters. Enter letters in the main grid and the smaller reference grid until all 26 letters of the alphabet have been accounted for. Proper nouns are excluded. *Yesterday's solution, right*

Cluelines Stuck on Codeword? To receive 4 random clues call 0901 293 6262 or text TIMECODE to 64343. Calls cost £1 plus your telephone company's network access charge. Texts cost £1 plus your standard network charge. For the full solution call 0905 757 0142. Calls cost £1 per minute plus your telephone company's network access charge. SP: Spoke, 0333 202 3390 (Mon-Fri, 9am-5.30pm).

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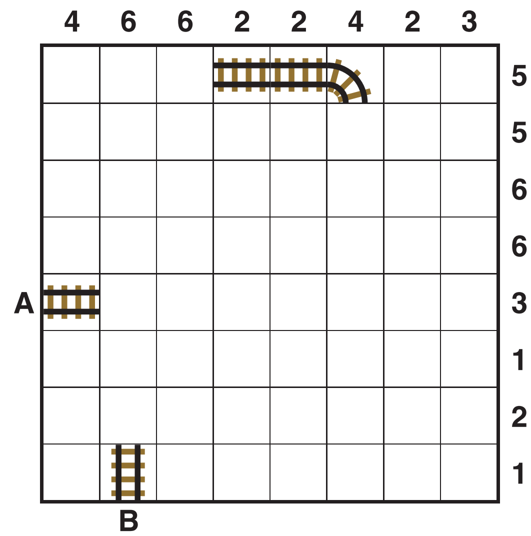
Lexica No 6789 No 6790





Slide the letters either horizontally or vertically back into the grid to produce a completed crossword. Letters are allowed to slide over other letters

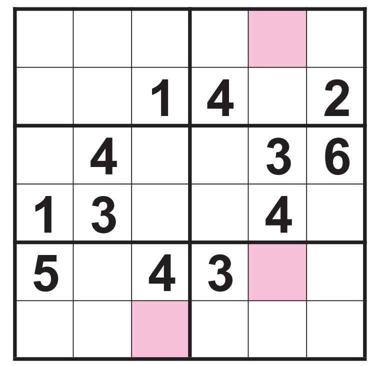
Train Tracks No 1889

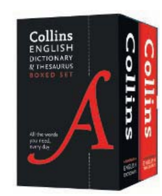


Lay tracks to enable the train to travel from village A to village B. The numbers indicate how many sections of rail go in each row and column. There are only straight rails and curved rails. The track cannot cross itself.

Win a Dictionary & Thesaurus

Fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x2 box contains the digits 1 to 6





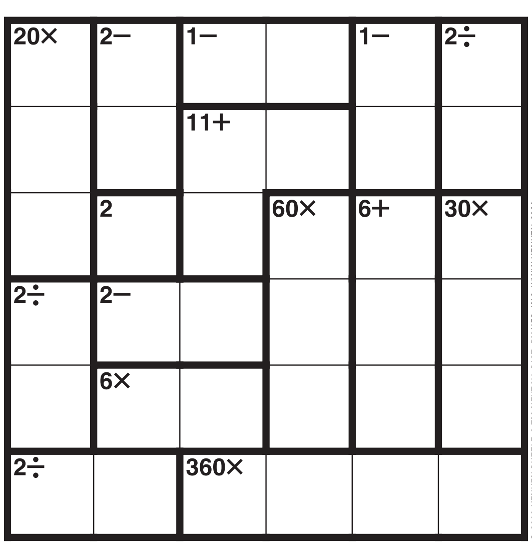
Winners will receive a *Collins English Dictionary & Thesaurus*

Solve the puzzle and text in the numbers in the three shaded boxes. Text TIMES followed by a space, then your three numbers, eg, TIMES 123, plus your name, address and postcode to 64343 (UK only), by midnight. Or enter by phone. Call 09012 925274 (ROI 1516 303 501) by midnight. Leave your three answer numbers (in any order) and your contact details.

Calls cost £1 (ROI €1.50) plus your telephone company's network access charge. Texts cost £1 plus your standard network charge. Winners will be picked at random from all correct answers received. One draw per week. Lines close at midnight tonight. If you call or text after this time you will not be entered but will still be charged. SP: Spoke, 0333 202 3390 (Mon-Fri, 9am-5.30pm).

What are your favourite puzzles in MindGames? Email: puzzles@thetimes.co.uk

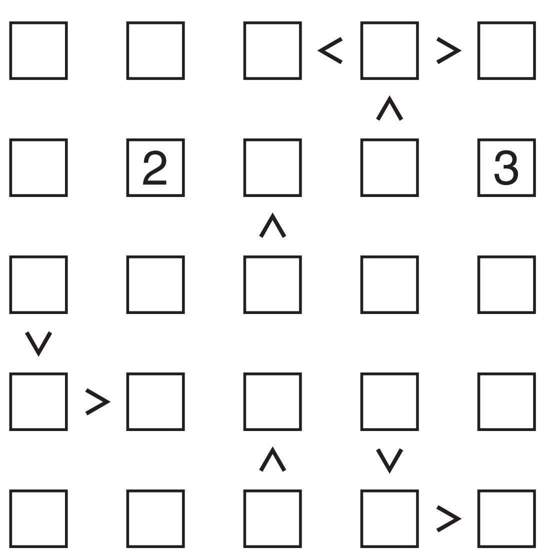
KenKen Difficult No 5843



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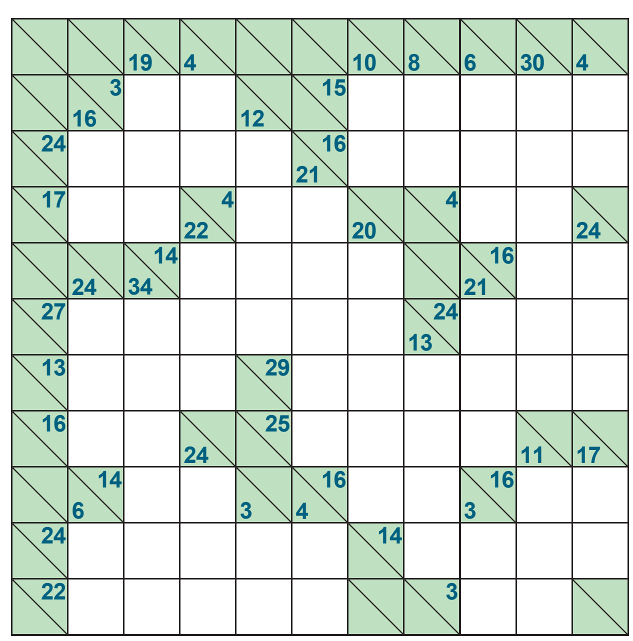
All the digits 1 to 6 must appear in every row and column. In each thick-line "block", the target number in the top left-hand corner is calculated from the digits in all the cells in the block, using the operation indicated by the symbol.

Futoshiki No 4435



Fill the blank squares so that every row and column contains each of the numbers 1 to 5 once only. The symbols between the squares indicate whether a number is larger (>) or smaller (<) than the number next to it.

Kakuro No 3394

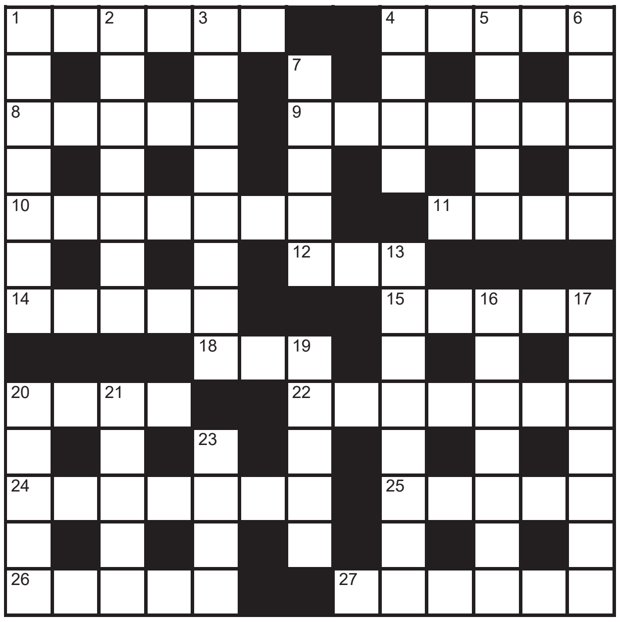


Fill the grid using the numbers 1 to 9 only. The numbers in each horizontal or vertical run of white squares add up to the total in the triangle to its left or above it. The same number may occur more than once in a row or column, but not within the same run of white squares.

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MindGames

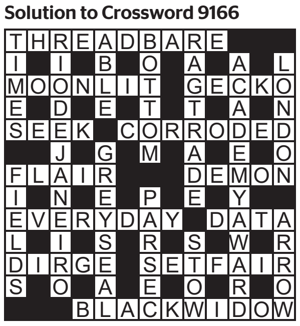
times2 Crossword No 9167



Across
1 Central American nation (6)
4 Match between local rivals (5)
8 Early spring star sign (5)
9 Unit of area (7)
10 North African capital (7)
11 Stained with pigment (4)
12 Unruly crowd (3)
14 South Asian language (5)
15 Ancient storyteller (5)
18 Imposed upper limit (3)
20 Course of action (4)
22 Liberate (7)
24 Dogmatic believer (7)
25 Long-distance walker (5)
26 Old five shilling coin (5)
27 Car engine cover (6)

Down
1 Ancient Egyptian ruler (7)
2 DIY power tool (4,3)
3 Utterly entrancing (8)
4 Floor of a ship (4)
5 Prepared (5)
6 Give way (5)
7 Yawning gap (5)
13 Fuss, commotion (8)
16 Ease off (7)
17 White-costumed clown (7)
19 Run off the presses (5)
20 Theme, subject (5)
21 Freight (5)
23 Berkshire public school (4)

Solution to Crossword 9166



Need help with today's puzzle? Call 0905 757 0143 to check the answers. Calls cost £1 per minute plus your telephone company's network access charge. SP: Spoke, 0333 202 3390 (Mon-Fri 9am-5.30pm).

Bridge Andrew Robson

Similar ... but different (78)

Contract North-South's clubs. Similar — yet oh-so different.

Deal One
Dealer S

North: ♠KJ6 ♥K832 ♦965 ♣K93
West: ♠93 ♥QJ9 ♦AK832 ♣J62
East: ♠108742 ♥6 ♦Q104 ♣Q854
South: ♠AQ5 ♥A10754 ♦J7 ♣A107

S	W	N	E
1♥	Pass(1)	3♥(2)	Pass
4♥	End		

(1) Definitely NOT a 2♦ overcall — flat shape, ace-king-empty in the diamonds, and a defensive heart holding.
(2) 10-12 points and four-card support. Barely worth it with such a barren shape.

West leads ♦A, East encouraging with ♦10. West continues with ♦K then a hopeful third diamond. As declarer, you ruff and hope to avoid a heart loser by crossing to ♥K (preserving ♥A10 finesse position in case West plays a picture) and returning to ♥A.

Unfortunately, East discards on the second heart and it may appear you must lose a club and a heart. However, the power of ♣109 can save you. First, eliminate spades, cashing the three rounds. West does best to discard on the third spade but you now exit with a third heart to West.

West finds herself endplayed to break open clubs, for if she leads a diamond (the dreaded ruff-and-discard), you can ruff in one hand and discard a club from the other.

Say West exits with ♣2. You play dummy's ♣3, beating East's ♣Q with ♣A (if East plays ♣8, you win ♣10). You now return ♣7 and, when East plays low, finesse dummy's ♣9 (or you could have run ♣10). Game made.

It is superior defence for West to switch to ♣J. However, you should play for split honours (West might have led ♣Q from ♣QJ). You beat ♣J with dummy's ♣K then finesse ♣10. Game made.

Deal Two
Dealer S

North: ♠KJ6 ♥K832 ♦965 ♣K53
West: ♠932 ♥QJ9 ♦AK832 ♣J6
East: ♠10874 ♥6 ♦Q104 ♣Q10982
South: ♠AQ5 ♥A10754 ♦J7 ♣A74

S	W	N	E
1♥	Pass	3♥	Pass
4♥	End		

West leads out ♦AK and a third diamond. You ruff, cross to ♥K and return to ♥A, East discarding. Things look bleak for, without ♣109, endplaying West to lead a club won't help you. What to do?

You must hope West holds at most two clubs. Cash ♣A, cross to ♣K (if West held no second club, she would be ruffing a loser). You then cash three rounds of spades.

At trick 11, you exit with a heart. West wins but, with no more clubs, can play only a diamond. You ruff in one hand, shed the losing club from the other, and claim your game. andrew.robson@thetimes.co.uk

Brain Trainer

EASY	34	x 3	− 4	50% OF IT	− 7	5/6 OF IT	+ 7	x 2	− 12	5/9 OF IT	ANSWER
MEDIUM	48	x 6	+ 78	1/2 OF IT	x 5	− 97	50% OF IT	+ 67	75% OF IT	+ 97	ANSWER
HARDER	216	x 7	+ 883	+ 1/5 OF IT	+ 418	+ 1/2 OF IT	+ 994	1/2 OF IT	+ 694	80% OF IT	ANSWER

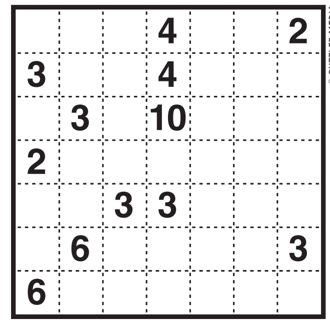
Polygon



From these letters, make words of **four** or more letters, always including the central letter. Answers must be in the *Concise Oxford Dictionary*, excluding capitalised words, plurals, conjugated verbs (past tense etc), adverbs ending in LY, comparatives and superlatives.
How you rate 12 words, average; 17, good; 21, very good; 26, excellent

Yesterday's answers
acyl, apple, appley, apply, cape, clap, clay, epical, ileac, lace, lacy, laic, leap, lipa, pace, pacey, pacy, pail, pale, palp, paly, peal, pial, pica, pilea, pipal, **pipeclay**, place, plaice, play, plea, plica

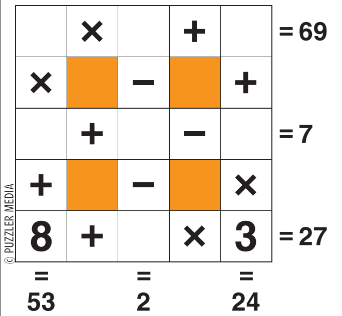
Cell Blocks No 4734



Divide the grid into square or rectangular blocks, each containing one digit only. Every block must contain the number of cells indicated by the digit inside it.

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Set Square No 3397

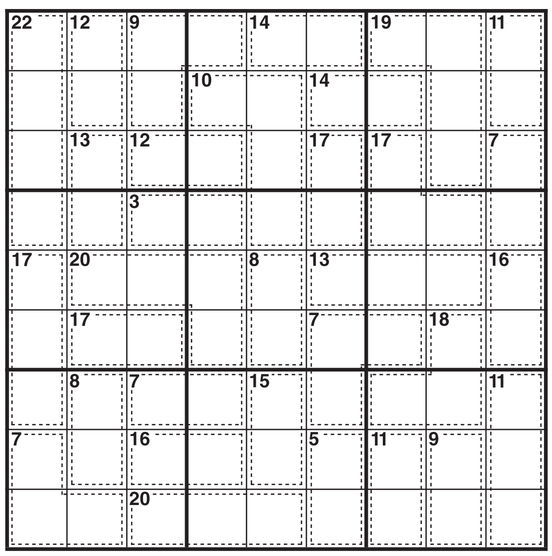


Enter each of the numbers from 1 to 9 in the grid, so that the six sums work. We've placed two numbers to get you started. Each sum should be calculated left to right or top to bottom.

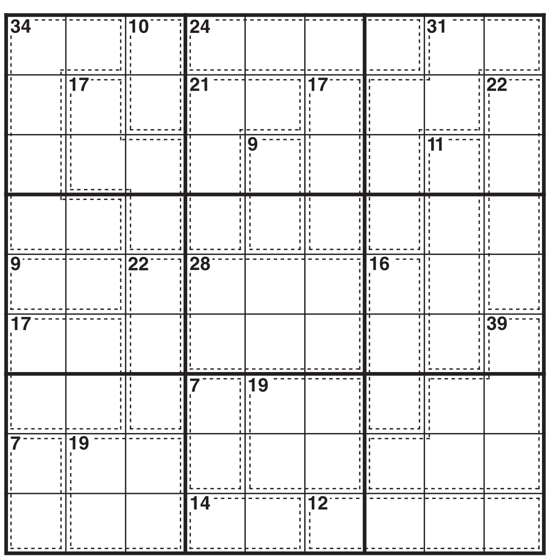
Please note, BODMAS does not apply

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Killer Moderate No 8784



Killer Deadly No 8785

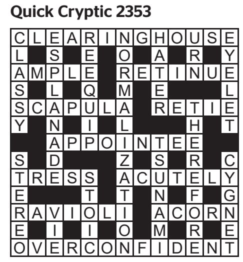


As with standard Sudoku, fill the grid so that every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9. Each set of cells joined by dotted lines must add up to the target number in its top-left corner. Within each set of cells joined by dotted lines, a digit cannot be repeated.

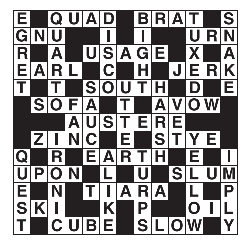
Cluelines Stuck on Sudoku, Killer or KenKen? Call 0901 293 6263 before midnight to receive four clues for any of today's puzzles. Calls cost £1 plus your telephone company's network access charge. SP: Spoke, 0333 202 3390 (Mon-Fri 9am-5.30pm).

Solutions

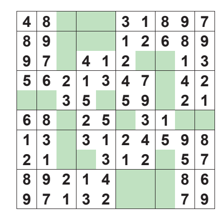
Quick Cryptic 2353



Codeword 4850



Kakuro 3393



Sudoku 13,906

4	8	6	7	3	9	5	1	2
1	5	3	2	6	4	8	7	9
2	9	7	5	8	1	4	6	3
6	3	5	8	7	2	1	9	4
7	1	8	9	4	6	2	3	5
9	4	2	1	5	3	6	8	7
8	7	1	4	9	5	3	2	6
5	6	9	3	2	8	7	4	1
3	2	4	6	1	7	9	5	8

Sudoku 13,907

2	8	9	7	6	4	3	5	1
3	4	5	1	9	2	6	7	8
6	7	1	8	5	3	2	9	4
4	2	3	9	7	8	5	1	6
1	9	6	2	3	5	8	4	7
7	5	8	4	1	6	9	2	3
8	3	4	5	2	1	7	6	9
9	1	2	6	8	7	4	3	5
5	6	7	3	4	9	1	8	2

Sudoku 13,908

7	3	8	6	9	2	4	1	5
4	6	9	7	5	1	8	2	3
1	5	2	8	4	3	7	6	9
9	4	1	5	7	6	3	8	2
6	8	5	3	2	4	9	7	1
2	7	3	9	1	8	5	4	6
8	1	6	4	3	9	2	5	7
3	2	7	1	8	5	6	9	4
5	9	4	2	6	7	1	3	8

Killer 8782

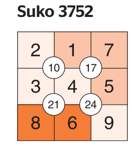
1	9	2	6	7	4	3	8	5
6	3	4	1	5	8	2	7	9
5	8	7	3	2	9	6	4	1
2	6	8	5	3	1	7	9	4
9	7	1	4	8	2	5	3	6
4	5	3	9	6	7	1	2	8
7	2	5	8	9	6	4	1	3
8	1	6	2	4	3	9	5	7
3	4	9	7	1	5	8	6	2

Killer 8783

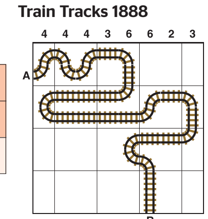
9	3	1	4	5	7	8	6	2
4	7	6	8	3	2	9	5	1
5	8	2	1	9	6	3	4	7
6	1	4	7	8	3	5	2	9
2	5	3	9	1	4	6	7	8
8	9	7	2	6	5	1	3	4
1	2	5	3	4	8	7	9	6
7	6	8	5	2	9	4	1	3
3	4	9	6	7	1	2	8	5

Quintagram
1 Ever
2 Crown
3 Putting
4 Village
5 Greenroom

Suko 3752

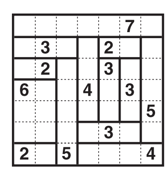


Train Tracks 1888

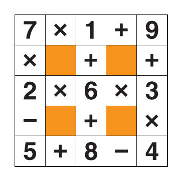


Brain Trainer
Easy 40; Medium 454; Harder 2,928

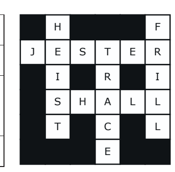
Cell Blocks 4733



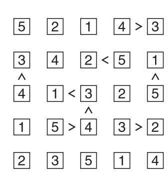
Set Square 3396



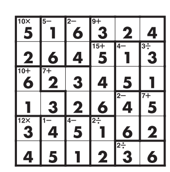
Lexica 6787



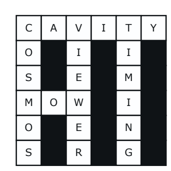
Futoshiki 4434



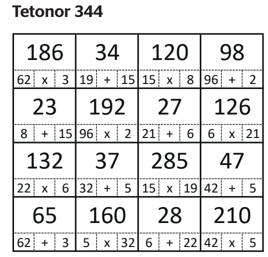
KenKen 5842



Lexica 6788



Tetonor 344



Word watch
Negus (a) A hot drink of port and lemon juice (*Collins*)
Tromba marina (a) An old member of the violin family (*Chambers*)
Ecthlipsis (b) The removal of a syllable ending in "m" before a vowel (*OED*)

Chess — Winning Move
1 ... Qh3! is an ingenious move. Black threatens both 2 ... Qxf1 mate and 2 ... Qxf3 mate. White has no defence as 2 Qxh3 Rd1+ leads to mate

Quiz
1 Robin **2** Matt Hancock **3** Sewing machine **4** Porgy and Bess **5** Rupert Murdoch **6** 18th century. He lived from 1725 to 1798 **7** John F Kennedy, born 1917. Lyndon B Johnson was the president who had been born earliest in the 20th century, in 1908 **8** *The Bay* **9** Arctic fox (*Vulpes lagopus*) **10** Europa **11** St James or James, son of Zebedee or James the Greater **12** Asger Jorn **13** Martin Garrix, real name Martijn Gerard Garritsen **14** Paul Hunter. He was also dubbed the "Beckham of the Baize" **15** Ego Ella May

MindGames

Word watch
David Parfitt

Negus
a A hot drink of port and lemon juice
b A contradictory statement
c A many-eyed monster of Greek myth

Tromba marina
a An old member of the violin family
b A seafarers' dance
c A type of blockage in a blood vessel

Ecthlipsis
a A method of inscribing stone with acid
b The removal of a syllable ending in "m"
c The globe thistle

Answers on page 19

Sudoku

Mild No 13,909

					8	7	5	
8		7					3	6
6	5				9			8
				9		2		3
	7	9		3	2			
		8	7					
	6		5	2			1	
		2		8		3		
						6	2	

Difficult No 13,910

	2						8	4
6		4	5		7		3	
7		9	8	3				
1				7	6			3
5		3	1	9				
4		7	2		3		1	
	3						2	9

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Fiendish No 13,911

	2		8					
		3		1	9			
				4	3	6	5	
1							7	3
5				8				6
7	9							2
	4	1	3	9				
			7	6		3		
					8		1	

Fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9.

The Times Daily Quiz
Olav Bjortomt

1 Which Batman sidekick is known as the "Boy Wonder"?

2 Which health secretary left his wife Martha for aide Gina Coladangelo?

3 Feed dogs, bobbin cover, presser foot and needle clamp screw are parts of which home appliance?

4 Which 1959 studio album by Miles Davis features arrangements from a 1935 Gershwin opera?

5 In 1986, who co-founded the Fox Broadcasting Company with Barry Diller?

6 Giacomo Casanova was the most famous womaniser of which century?

7 Who was the USA's first president who had been born in the 20th century?

8 Marsha Thomason began playing DS Jenn Townsend in the third series of which ITV crime drama?

9 Which hardy fox species is Iceland's only native land mammal?

10 Which Galilean moon of Jupiter is named after the Phoenician mother of King Minos of Crete?

11 Executed by the sword, who was the first apostle to be martyred?

12 Which Danish situationist artist's 1959 painting *The Disquieting Duckling* was vandalised in April 2022?

13 Which Dutch DJ was No 1 on *DJ Mag*'s Top 100 DJs list in 2016, 2017 and 2018?

14 Which English snooker player (1978-2006) was nicknamed "the Man with the Golden Cue"?

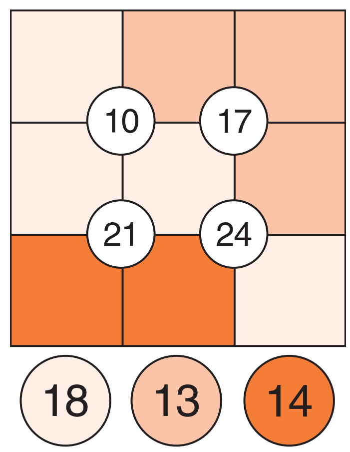
15 Which alternative R&B musician from south London is pictured?

ALAMY


15

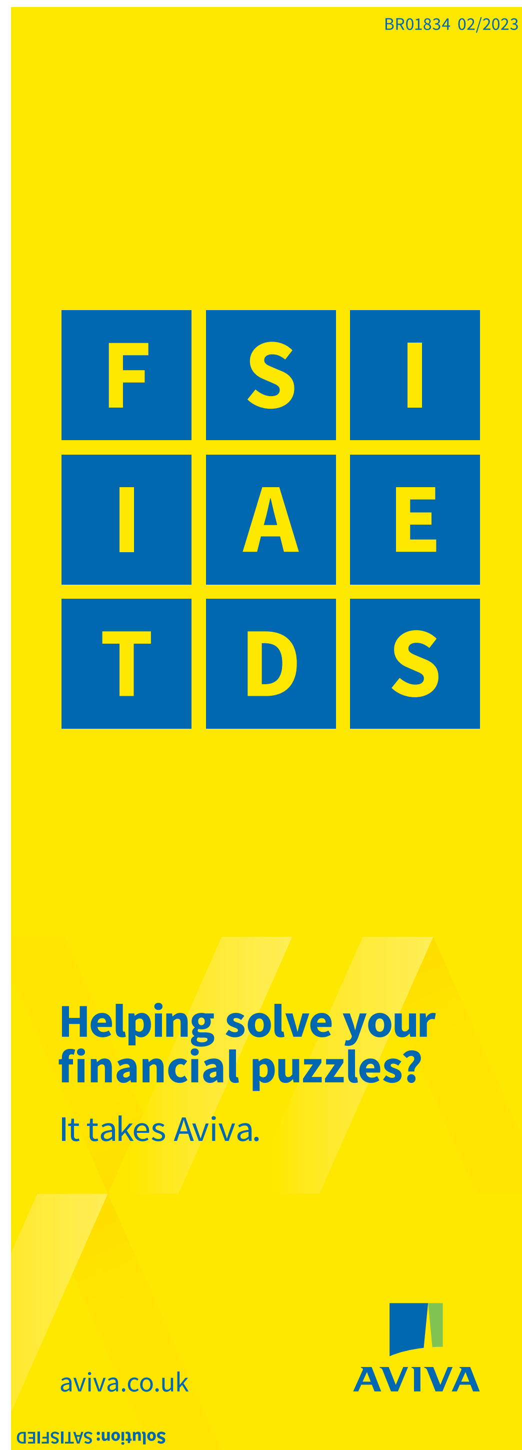
Answers on page 19

Suko
No 3752

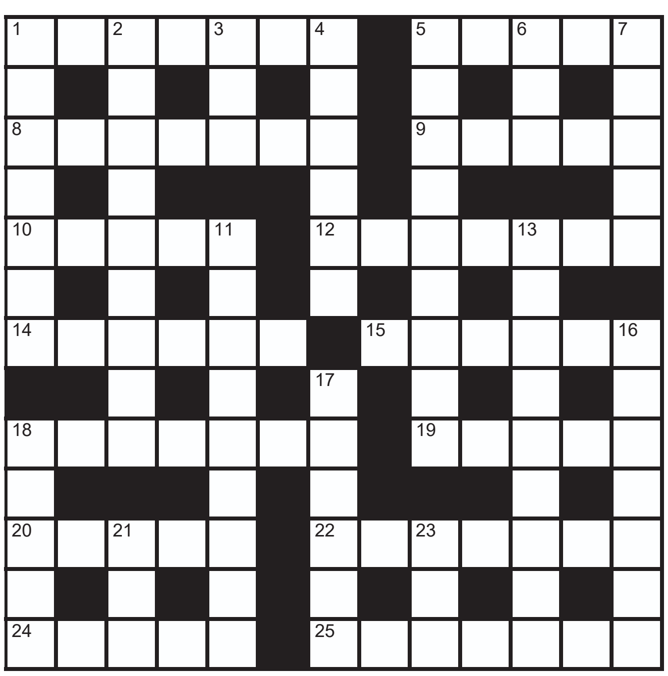


Place the numbers 1 to 9 in the spaces so that the number in each circle is equal to the sum of the four surrounding spaces, and each colour total is correct

For interactive puzzles visit thetimes.co.uk



The Times Quick Cryptic
No 2354 by Des



Across
1 Having it covered in meat sauce is something serious! (7)
5 Lessens force: everything's to follow (5)
8 Inscrutability of the writer's pen, capturing queen (7)
9 Inside bag, heroin for cabin (5)
10 Be present when old police company returns (5)
12 Hospital department with frozen treats is alluring! (7)
14 Laurel, maybe with daughter's bears (6)
15 Ladle disturbed red pip (6)
18 Harassed clients obtaining design template (7)
19 Meeting of clergy into heresy, no doubt (5)
20 Lass, married, murdered brother (5)
22 Implied meaning of chaos, with time (7)
24 Longs to regularly display options: easy! (5)
25 Letters beginning each numbered clue offer Des's excuse, duly disguised (7)

Down
1 New lambs go for frolics (7)
2 Wild sea coast gripping one's companion (9)
3 Fury evident in one note (3)
4 Went up and down with two Yankees carrying old dictionary (2-4)
5 Vehicle's uncontrolled movements: search follows (9)
6 We'll drive, finally, over a meadow (3)
7 Vacant kasbah toured by British spies and worshippers (5)
11 Hopeless clue Idris mocks (9)
13 As a beggar maybe, better to get home help (3,2,4)
16 Teacher after wine and ginger (7)
17 Burning meat few, in short, can eat (6)
18 Assess, briefly, maths problem at college (3,2)
21 Scrap book, fashionable (3)
23 Hemmed in by strangers, I complain so! (3)

*Yesterday's solution on page 19**